

Jaana Paju

# The Myth of Student Activities – What Effects Does Volunteering in Positions of Trust Cause in Working Life Context?

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

International Business & Logistics

Thesis

10.9.2017

Author(s) Title	Jaana Paju The Myth of Student Activities – What Effects Does Volunteering in Positions of Trust Cause in Working Life Context?
Number of Pages Date	46 pages + 4 appendices 9 September 2017
Degree	Bachelor of Business Administration
Degree Programme	International Business & Logistics
Instructor	Daryl Chapman, Senior Lecturer
<p>The purpose of this thesis is to offer an insight into student activities and examine how volunteering in positions of trust during higher education studies affects the volunteer in working life context. Several student activities exist in each Finnish universities of applied of sciences (UAS) and these activities are in most cases directed and managed by students. However, the topic of volunteering in positions of trust has not been examined in detail, especially from the working life point of view.</p> <p>The topic was inspected by first, reviewing literature surrounding the subject and determining the most common positions of trust existing in the UAS environment. On the second phase of thesis project, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with experienced national level student volunteers and based on the literature review and interview findings, created an online questionnaire for past and present volunteers to answer. The number of responses exceeded the author's expectations and the respondents represents a large and diverse sample.</p> <p>The key findings the thesis suggest that the respondents have gained a positive effect on their working life attributes from the volunteering activities. Moreover, the volunteer period has been especially beneficial for the development the respondents' soft skills.</p> <p>The results of the thesis may be helpful for UAS staff as they might gain detailed information what the positions of trust are how they may be helpful for students. Students themselves may finally gain primary data concerning the topic and no longer need to rely on rumours and private conversations. In addition, students gain knowledge about how to use arguments concerning positions of trust in a job interview, for instance.</p>	
Keywords	Volunteering, positions of trust, extra-curricular activity, student, working life

## Contents

List of tables and figures	iii
Abbreviations	iv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research question	2
1.2 Translations	3
2 Literature review	3
2.1 Extra-curricular activities	3
2.2 Soft and hard skills	4
2.3 Employability	6
2.4 Requirements of employers	7
2.5 Graduate unemployment	9
3 Typical positions of trust	11
3.1 Student union	11
3.1.1 Board	13
3.1.2 Student parliament	14
3.2 Tutoring and head tutoring	14
3.3 Student association	15
3.3.1 Guild	16
3.4 Committee	16
3.5 Board of the university of applied sciences	17
3.6 National student organisation	17
3.6.1 University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland – SAMOK	18
3.6.2 Labour union related	18
3.6.3 Political	19
3.7 Others	19
4 Research methods	20
4.1 Research types	20
4.2 Quantitative and qualitative approaches	20
4.3 Mixed methods approach	21
4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews	22

4.3.2	Questionnaire	22
4.4	Reliability and validity	23
5	Interviews	24
5.1	Accreditation	24
5.2	Amount of work	26
5.3	Reasons for participating	27
5.4	Educational deficit	28
5.5	Requirements of current working life	28
5.6	Benefits for students	29
6	Research findings	29
6.1	Demographics	30
6.2	Educational background	31
6.3	Positions of trust	34
6.4	Career and job searching	36
6.5	Effects concerning working life	39
7	Conclusion	43
7.1	Further recommendations	45
	References	47

## Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide

Appendix 2. Questionnaire in Finnish

Appendix 3. Questionnaire in English

Appendix 4. Questionnaire open ended responses

## List of tables and figures

<b>Table 1.</b> Examples of hard and soft skills	5
<b>Table 2.</b> The influence of candidate's attributes on hiring decision	7
<b>Table 3.</b> The significance of candidate skills/qualities, rated by employees in the US	8
<b>Table 4.</b> Background information of interviewees	25
<b>Table 5.</b> Question 6. In which of the following positions of trust have volunteered?	34
<b>Table 6.</b> Question 13. Have the experiences gained benefited you in working life? Please also specify why they have or haven't.	40
<b>Table 7.</b> Question 14. Which skills related to working life did you learn or improve while volunteering in a position of trust?	41
<b>Table 8.</b> Question 15. Which skill learned/improved or experience gained while volunteering in a position of trust has benefited you the most in working life so far? Please mention at least two examples and explain briefly, how.	43
<b>Figure 1.</b> Generic expertise emphasised in UAS degree required positions during 2012-2016	9
<b>Figure 2.</b> Unemployment rates of higher education graduates in OECD countries in 2015	10
<b>Figure 2.</b> Categories of positions of trust	12
<b>Figure 3.</b> Age distribution of respondents.	30
<b>Figure 4.</b> Gender distribution of respondents	31
<b>Figure 5.</b> Distribution of graduation.	32
<b>Figure 6.</b> Fields of study.	33
<b>Figure 7.</b> Question 5. Has volunteering in a position of trust delayed your graduation?	33
<b>Figure 8.</b> Question 7. Have you managed to use the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) procedures with your positions of trust or transfer them as credits into your degree?	35
<b>Figure 9.</b> Question 8. Have your positions of trust affected your career choice? If yes, please specify briefly.	36
<b>Figure 10.</b> Question 9. Have the positions of trust improved your skills in job searching? If they have, please specify briefly, how.	37
<b>Figure 11.</b> Question 10. Have you found a job or an internship through the connections you created while volunteering in a position of trust?	37

**Figure 12.** Question 11. Try to memorize your most recent job search process. In which of the following stages of the process did you mention your positions of trust? 38

**Figure 13.** Question 12. Try to estimate what kind of an effect did the mentioning of positions of trust have on your most recent job search process. 39

## **Abbreviations**

**ECA** = Extra-curricular activity

**GPA** = Grade point average

**HEI** = Higher education institution

**UAS** = University of applied sciences

## 1 Introduction

The core purpose of universities of applied sciences (UAS) in Finland is to produce professionals with high emphasis on labour market and whose knowledge would eventually support regional growth (Opintopolku, a). In addition to the regular lectures and course related work, a vast student activity offering exists in each UAS. Student unions, field specific student associations, tutors and committees, for instance, are a regular sight within the campuses. Furthermore, the majority of these different activities are naturally managed and established by students who not only participate on decision making process within the UAS but also act for the benefit of other students. The managing people are usually elected into the positions or chosen by a representative council of sorts, thus they may represent even a large number of students and operate in positions of trust. An exact number exists neither for the number of student activities available or the people volunteering in them. A rough estimate based on the author's own experiences is that around 1 000 students volunteer annually in the various student activities and, to be more specific, act in at least one kind of a position of trust.

Volunteering in a position of trust is a form of extra-curricular activity (ECA) which have been proved to bring positive development the volunteer also during higher education studies. For instance, ECAs may develop teamworking skills, enhance social skills and offer leadership experience which all are essential factors in the modern working life (Greenbank, 2015: 187-188). ECAs themselves have existed for decades and an ongoing research occurs around them.

Furthermore, as the competition for jobs especially for fresh graduates constantly tightens, students must create a competitive edge for themselves in order to land a job (Baldwin, et al., 2013: 681). In most fields employers require more than the field specific knowledge from the employees. As an example, an engineer may require sales skills and an accounting business graduate most likely needs to master project management skills. Moreover, sometimes these additional skills may not be learned simply by sitting on lectures.

When a student moves from study life to working, he or she takes the personal experiences with oneself, also the ones gained while volunteering in positions of trust. Sometimes students may even be told that “*These experiences are bound to help in working life*” while volunteering. This particular occasion woke the author’s interest on the issue and brought up the question “*What have the students taken from volunteering in positions of trust and brought with them into working life?*”.

Earlier studies concerning the link between volunteering in positions of trust during higher education studies and working life has not been widely researched either in English or Finnish literature. As mentioned before, general research concerning the effect of ECAs and their effect on employability and benefits do exists. However, these studies hardly go deeper into specific details concerning the possible positions of trust. Therefore, the most common types of positions of trust must be determined, reviewed how they match with relevant theory and examined how these specific positions have affected the volunteer in a working life context. Furthermore, both UASs and the volunteers may benefit from the overall research as the institutions gain insight about what the volunteers actually do in their offices and the volunteers may finally gain wide insight about the effects.

This study will begin with literature review presenting the most essential theory surrounding volunteering and ECAs. The second part will introduce the relevant positions of trust included in the research. Third part will introduce the research methods used to utilize the thesis project and is followed by the fourth and fifth sections that present the results of the active research phase. Finally, the research will draw a conclusion based on the research findings and will introduce some suggestions for further studies.

## 1.1 Research question

As mentioned in the introduction, the state of modern working life is constantly changing and the competition for jobs is tighter than in the past. The author had encountered extensive discussions about how student engagement and their possible benefits for future careers during her studies and period in positions of trust. Furthermore, as the primary purpose of UASs is to produce academic professionals with close connection with working life, it is worth exploring has the extra effort from volunteering offered additional “working life capital” for graduates and current volunteers. Therefore, this study aims to explore variety the positions of trust available in Finnish UASs in working life context and the final research questions could be stated as:



*How has volunteering in position(s) of trust during UAS studies affected the person's working life attributes?*

As can be concluded from the research question, the study is limited to UAS students. In addition to alumni, current volunteers are included in the study as well because they might work during studies.

## 1.2 Translations

The availability of English material is relatively limited. Researches about topics surrounding the research question exist in English literature whereas exact references concerning the positions of trust highly depends on the activeness of the organisation. Some organisations have a wide set of English material available on their websites whereas some hardly have any. Furthermore, the majority of the inhabitants on the Finnish student organisation sector are native Finnish speakers and thus unfortunately non-natives are a minority within the group. In order to gain a wide set of knowledge about the organisations and various positions of trust in the Finnish UAS environment, the author has utilized literature and electronical resources in both English and Finnish. In addition, the author conducted the active research phase of the thesis mostly in Finnish due to general convenience reasons.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 Extra-curricular activities

An unequivocal term for volunteering in a position of trust during higher education does not exist in English literature (Greenbank, 2015: 187). In Finnish language, the term "opiskelija-aktiivitoiminta" refers to the situation when during higher education studies a student participates in responsibility requiring activities that are not part of any curricula but are in one way or another connected with the studying environment (METKA, 2017a). Relevant positions of trust for the research are elaborated in section 4.

The University of Birmingham determines volunteering as the following:

Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims primarily to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than close relatives. (n.d.)

Burdney et al. (2010: 66) refer to volunteering in their research and mention “youth based, university clubs and organizations, and sports and cultural organization”. However, volunteering in student context may also withhold, for example, charitable work and fundraising which are not directly connected with positions of trust (The University of Birmingham, n.d.). Lin (2010: 190) writes about the role of extracurricular activities on Taiwanese university students’ life and mentions “clubs, student associations, athletic teams, and/or part-time jobs” as an example. According to the University of Cambridge (2017), ECAs may also include other forms of student activity, such as music lesson and drama clubs.

ECA and volunteering are overlapping terms and may refer to equal phenomena, hence the author has utilized literature mentioning both terms. However, this study concentrates such activities into which the student has been elected or chosen by a student authority and that benefit students or the studying environment, i.e. position of trust.

## 2.2 Soft and hard skills

In working life context, a person competencies can be divided into two different categories: soft skills and hard skills. Poisson-de Haro & Turgut (2012: 216) divide soft skills into two categories: societal skills and human skills. Societal skills refer to the management of aspects surrounding the operating environment of the firm. Human skills refer to the issues connected with interpersonal aspects in working environment, such as team-working and agreeableness. According to Ali, Kazeem & Rosli (2017: 391), soft skills are “non-cognitive abilities that are innate in individuals and are necessary for good social”. They further add that soft skills tend to be problematic to measure or quantify as they are in connection with one’s personality and emotive aptitude.

Kolb et. al. (1993, cited in Burcell et. al., 2002: 10) describe hard skills as the overall skills that are linked to the technical characteristic completing one’s job and typically require acquisition of intelligence. Weber et. al. (2009, cited in de Villiers, 2010: 2) continue that hard skills customarily involve addressing data and administrative skills. This is supported by Rao (2013) who additionally complements that hard skills are accurately measurable. Furthermore, Rao labels hard skills as mostly concrete and soft skills as mostly not concrete. The structure of an employees required hard skills depends on the category of business and industry whereas soft skills are more dependent on both the other people within the industry or business and business culture. (Rao, 2013: 3-4.)

In addition to the technical aspect, Poisson-de Haro & Turgut (2012) divide hard skills into another category as well: the conceptual skills. These skills relate to the decision-making process and are more abstract than the technical skills, such as insight and vision in relation to the job (Poisson-de Haro & Turgut, 2012: 214-215).

Table 1 presents examples of both soft and hard skills. As an example, computer literacy and written communication more than likely require studying and practice to achieve a sufficient expertise to manage in an UAS degree requiring job (technical expertise) whereas soft skills necessarily do not. Soft skills such as initiative and willingness to learn are aspects of a one's personality and rather develop with time. Moreover, in relation to the research of Rao (2013: 3-4), hard skills such as computer literacy and written communication can be measured quite precisely, for instance with exams during studies.

Table 1. Examples of hard and soft skills (Burchell, et al., 2002: 11).

Soft skills	Hard skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork</li> <li>• Initiative</li> <li>• Willingness to learn</li> <li>• Impact and influence on others</li> <li>• Customer service orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer literacy</li> <li>• Analytical thinking</li> <li>• Written communication</li> <li>• Technical expertise</li> <li>• Conceptual thinking</li> </ul>

Robert Bolton noted already in 1986 that approximately 80 % of employees failing at a job, fail because they lack to the ability to socially perceive co-workers and not due to insufficiency of their technical knowledge (1986, cited in Crosbie, 2005: 46). The importance of soft skills has since increased when reaching the present working life. Robles (2012) states that soft skills should be an equally relevant indicator of job performance than the traditional measurement objectives (hard skills) and that the two categories should balance each other. In addition, as soft skills are a critical factor in the current working environment, they should be regarded as an investment in the operations of a business because employees with adequate combination of soft and hard skills tend to perform efficiently. (Robles, 2012: 462-463.) In 2015, LinkedIn conducted a research to determine the most desired soft skills of job seekers and according to the study, the five most desirable soft skills in an applicant are: communication skills, adequateness, team working skills, punctuality and critical thinking (Brooks, 2016).

Furthermore, Baldwin et. al. (2013: 696) state that the different academic programmes are currently falling behind with adapting into employers' changing requirements concerning graduate qualities. Higher education institutions should invest on the development of soft skills across the variety of degree programmes. Thus, the institution would both maintain its educational competitiveness and offer the students best possible baseline for working life.

### 2.3 Employability

Lees determines employability as containing the qualities required to sustain the employment and that enable professional development at the workplace. However, employability should not be mixed with the concept of "employment" which only refers to the situation of having a job. (2002, cited in El-Temtamy, et al., 2016: 102.) Yorke further defines the concept as the control of skills and personal qualities that cover and reach beyond a degree (2007, cited in Felfe, et al., 2014: 155).

The importance of employability has notably grown since the beginning of 2000s and the discussion around the topic has become expressively wider simultaneously. One of the key elements leading to this is the number of graduates entering the job market. Whereas the number of fresh graduates increases, the number of jobs available increases on a much slower rate. Hence, job seekers and especially recent graduates should create individual competitive edges to maximize personal employability preferences. (Baldwin, et al., 2013: 681-683.)

Baldwin et. al. (2013: 695) classify the employability factors of undergraduates into five categories: soft skills, academic reputation, functional skills, problem solving skills and pre-graduate experience. Out of these five, soft skills were estimated to have the most significant influence. Moreover, when individual employability factors were ranked, five of the top six factors were from the soft skills category. (Baldwin, et al., 2013: 695-696.) Ishengoma & Vaaland (2016: 24) emphasize the quality of the higher education institution (HEI) and the activities available for students as factors closely connected with employability. However, the factors vary based on what are the characteristics of the target population, for example undergraduates vs. 40-year-old or older employees with a university degree (De Cuyper, et al., 2014: 595; Felfe, et al., 2014: 155).

Whereas employability refers to the overall situation of containing qualities and attributes required to both maintain the job and advance during one's career, *perceived employability* concentrates, according to De Cuyper, et al. (2014: 594), on the individual's own perceptions about the employability factors. For example, how would one's skills match the requirements in the current working place and what is their relation to advancing in the job or finding a new and more demanding job opportunities. De Cuyper, et al. (2014: 598-599) further elaborate that employees who consider themselves relatively more highly skilled, have an access to relevant training and have the motivation to continuously develop personal expertise also have a more positive sense of perceived employability.

## 2.4 Requirements of employers

In the US, the *National Association of Colleges and Employers* (NACE) conducts annually the *Job Outlook*, a research on employers' perceptions on recent college graduates and their hiring perspectives (NACE, 2015: 5). The research offers an insight into what attributes employers require from recent graduates and how the attributes are emphasised on a recruitment process.

Table 2. The influence of candidate's attributes on hiring decision. (NACE, 2015: 32).

Attribute	2016 Average Influence Rating*	2015 Average Influence Rating*
Major	4.0	3.9
Has held leadership position	3.9	3.9
Has been involved in extracurricular activities (clubs, sports, student government, etc.)	3.6	3.6
High GPA (3.0 or above)	3.5	3.6
School attended	2.9	2.8
Has done volunteer work	2.8	2.8
Is fluent in a foreign language	2.2	2.4
Has studied abroad	2.0	2.1

\*5-point scale, where 1=No influence at all, 2=Not much influence, 3=Somewhat of an influence, 4=Very much influence, and 5=Extreme influence.

In the 2015 job outlook, out of the 201 respondents more than 69.3 % stated that they will implicate a grade point average (GPA) cut off for graduates with GPA less than 3.0. If the applicant passes the GPA screening, the employers will continue to analyse the application documents further. According to the study, the three most desired attributes that employees seek in a resume are leadership skills, ability to work in a team and

written communication skills. Furthermore, the employers were asked to rate the influence of the attributes on hiring decisions. As illustrated on table 2, the highest influence was on the applicants' major of study, which was closely followed by leadership experience. The third most influential preference was involvement in ECAs. (NACE, 2015: 29-32.)

In addition, employers were requested to rate the importance of ten different skills/qualities that should be relevant on most fields, such as teamworking, decision making and problem solving and technical knowledge related to the job (NACE, 2015: 32). Table 3 presents results of the grading: the highest importance was on the "*Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization*", followed closely by the ability to teamwork. Furthermore, the top five qualities of a candidate consist of soft skills and hard skills such as quantitative data analysis and technical knowledge are positioned on or below the middle of the table.

Table 3. The significance of candidate skills/qualities, rated by employees in the US. (NACE, 2015: 32)

Skill/Quality	Weighted average rating*
Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization	4.63
Ability to work in a team structure	4.62
Ability to make decisions and solve problems	4.49
Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work	4.41
Ability to obtain and process information	4.34
Ability to analyze quantitative data	4.21
Technical knowledge related to the job	3.99
Proficiency with computer software programs	3.86
Ability to create and/or edit written reports	3.60
Ability to sell or influence others	3.55

\*5-point scale, where 1=Not at all important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; and 5=Extremely important

In 2012, the *Finnish Chamber of Commerce* executed a relatively similar research to determine the expertise requirements in working life for years 2012-2016. Among the results, the study presents the most important generic types of expertise that would be emphasized in positions that require UAS degree during the four-year period. As presented on figure 1, the three most important generic types of proficiency were initiative, problem solving and customer service skills. (Finnish Chamber of Commerce, 2012: 13, 15.)

The most important general types of expertise vary between UAS degrees. According to the study, managerial skills are especially emphasized on the industrial and construction field whereas on the business field sales, marketing and general business expertise are emphasized the most. Furthermore, the size of the company may also affect the order of the most valued proficiencies. As an example, in companies with more than 100 employees, the managerial, interaction and communication skills and personal initiative are relatively more essential. Entrepreneurship skills and business expertise are valued more in smaller businesses. (Finnish Chamber of Commerce, 2012: 13, 15.) Furthermore, soft skills such as initiativeness and problems solving skills were estimated to be more crucial than technical hard skills such as IT competencies and language skills.

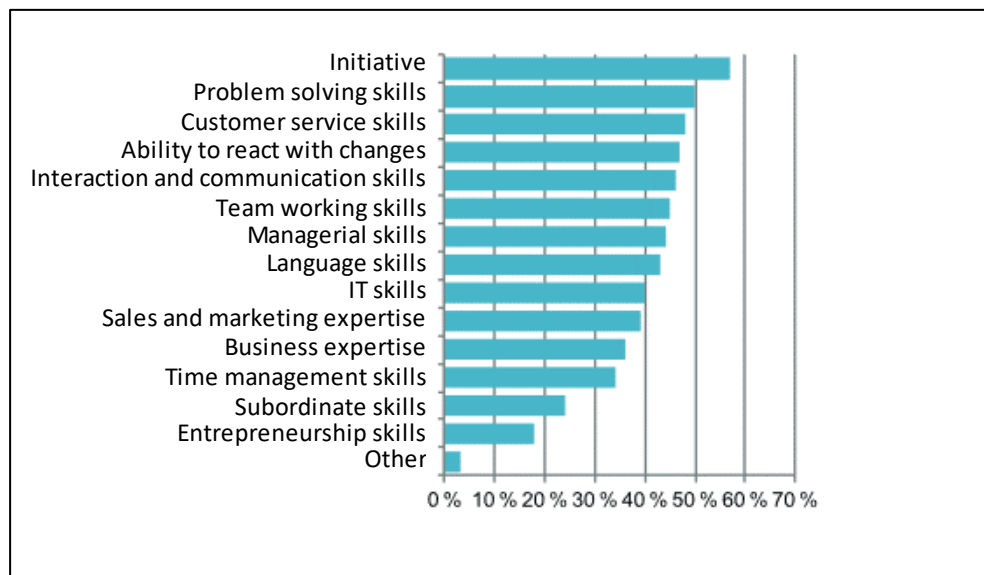


Figure 1. Generic expertise emphasised in UAS degree required positions during 2012-2016 (Finnish Chamber of Commerce, 2012).

## 2.5 Graduate unemployment

As mentioned in section 2.3, the number of graduates entering the job market is constantly growing whereas the amount of vacancies available remains relatively stable. Moreover, certain countries, such as Greece and Spain, are still recovering from the effects of the 2008 financial crisis or the side effects caused by its aftermath (OECD, 2016). Hence, all graduates cannot find employment from job market whilst HEIs continue to produce the same amount of graduates. Therefore, graduate unemployment increases.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measures regularly the unemployment rates in its member countries. As presented in figure 2, the average graduate unemployment rate in the OECD countries was 4.8 % in 2015. The highest graduate unemployment rate was in Greece (19.0 %) and the lowest in Hungary and Czech Republic (2.2 %). (OECD, 2016.) Finland was among the top 10 countries with the highest graduate unemployment rates. In 2015 the rate was 6.4 % which is clearly above the OECD average.

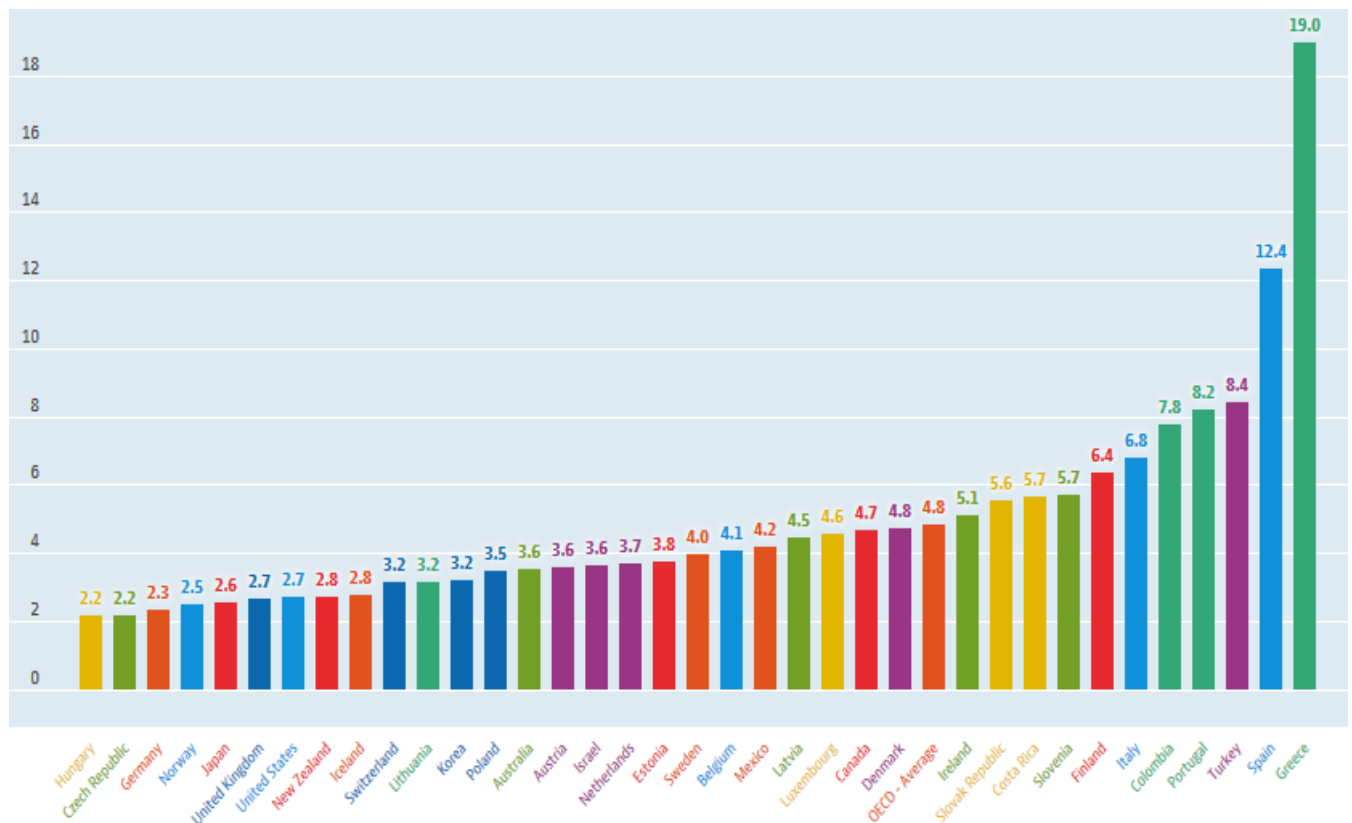


Figure 2. Unemployment rates of higher education graduates in OECD countries in 2015. (OECD, 2016)

In 2014, 21 692 students graduated from UAS and 81.6 % of them were employed a year after graduation (Statistics Finland, 2017). According to the *Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland* (Akava) the overall number of unemployed higher education graduates increased drastically after 2012. For instance, the number of those with a bachelor's degree arose from approximately from 14 000 to 26 000 and for master's degree withholders the number moved from approximately 12 000 to 22 000. (Akava, 2017a.) Unemployed fresh graduates (bachelor + master + doctor) totalled 3



756 at the end of May 2016. However, at the end of May 2017 the number had declined into 3 022. (Akava, 2017b.)

Furthermore, the amount of employed may vary greatly between academic degrees. The rates are the highest with BBAs (3 912) and engineers with UAS background (5 797), however these are also the tow fields in which the unemployment has declined the most as of May 2017. On the contrary, university engineers had the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of unemployed graduates (2 432) which, too, had declined significantly by the end of the period. The lowest unemployment rates were with dentists (26) and farmacists (105). (Akava, 2017b.)

### **3 Typical positions of trust**

The overall structure of the positions of trust in Finnish universities of applied sciences is somewhat unified. Certain structures exist in each institution of higher education as they are required by the law whereas some positions exist only in one or a few universities of applied sciences. This section elaborates further the areas of trust and portrays how each of them could be categorized. As mentioned in section 1.2, literature to discuss the positions of trust hardly exists. Therefore, the author has referred to the websites of various student organisations.

#### **3.1 Student union**

Student union is a statutory corporation, established by the Act for Finnish universities of applied sciences (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014, s.6(41)). Students whose studies eventually lead to a higher education degree are entitled to become members of the student union in the university of applied sciences in which they are completing their degree. The purpose of a student union is to act as a unitive bridge between its members and further their societal, social and mental endeavours. In addition, student union advances the aspirations which relate to the students' position within the society. (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014, s.6(41).) Furthermore, the function of a student union is to name student representatives to committees of the institution, name student members for the student allowance committee and participate in basic student health care services

if necessary<sup>1</sup>. (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014, s.6(41)(1-3).) Currently, there are 25 UAS student unions in Finland (SAMOK, 2017a).

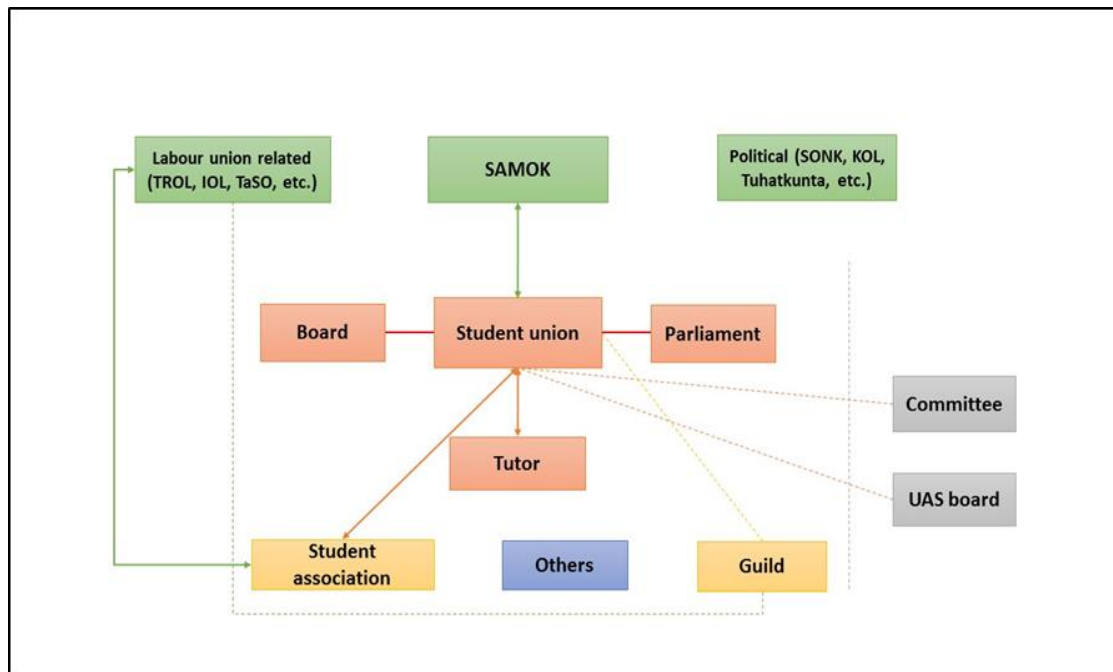


Figure 2. Categories of positions of trust.

Student unions are self-governing institutions, although the principal of the university of applied sciences accepts the official rules of the union (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014, s.6(41)). The governance of a student union is managed both by the board of the union and the student parliament. The distribution of responsibilities between the two entities is determined with the rules of the union (SAMOK, 2016: 18-21).

Student unions are managed by the executive director and chairperson of the board. The executive director generally is responsible for administrative tasks of the organisations, such as financial management, human resource management and secretarial tasks. The chairperson manages the board and cooperates extremely closely with the executive director as both the strategical and operational management of the union is divided for the two. In addition to the executive director, student unions may have employees who

<sup>1</sup> This statement was included into law in case the universities of applied sciences would eventually join the Finnish Student Healthcare Service (FSHS). (SAMOK, 2016: 44)

work full-time or part-time on a certain responsibility area (SAMOK, 2016: 61). For instance, the student union METKA has specialist for communications, guidance and tutoring, membership services and advocacy (METKA, 2017a).

The primary revenue source for a student union are usually the membership fees (SAMOK, 2016: 54). Other general funding sources are the general grant from the HEI (related to peer tutoring, exchange student tutoring and guidance, sport services, etc.) (Kärkinen, et al., 2016). In addition, by cooperating with businesses and external organisations, student unions may gain sponsorship revenues as well (SAMO, 2015).

### 3.1.1 Board

A board is elected each year by the student parliament, after the student parliament elections (SAMOK, 2016: 18). The board consists of a chairperson, vice chairperson and approximately 4-6 board members (the number is determined on the rules of each student union). Based on the decisions of the board, the operational tasks are usually divided into responsibility areas and one board member is assigned with one or more areas depending on personal interests and/or skills. (SAMOK, 2016: 18-19.) If the area is particularly demanding or large, the board might assign more than one person for the area in question. Responsibility areas may include, for example, event management, communications, sports, tutoring and advocacy. (METKA. 2017b). However, the structure of a student union may be based on working groups when one group consists of approximately 2-4 board members and the trust areas are wider concepts than in the previously mentioned structure. As an example, the student union HELGA operates with two working groups; the advocacy group and the events and services group. (HELGA, 2017.)

The board can either be a working board or non-working board. In a working board, the members literally work in the board and may receive remuneration monthly or periodically. The amount of work can be compared to a fulltime job, depending on the activeness of the person in question. (OSAKO, 2017.)

In addition to the tasks determined by the Act for Universities of Applied Sciences, student unions have other duties determined by rules of the union. Typical rule-determined duties are, for example, student advocacy related activities or offering free-time activity possibilities for students (culture, sports, etc.). (SAMOK, 2016: 11.)

### 3.1.2 Student parliament

Student parliament is the highest deciding authority in a student union. The core target of a student parliament is to make decisions which direct the operations of the union. Responsibilities of the student parliament may include, for example, electing or dismissing the board, deciding on the budget and defining general guidelines for the financial operations of the union. The duties vary between the organisations and the official responsibilities are defined with the rules of the student union. In addition, the student parliament nominates the student representatives for the committees of the UAS. (SAMOK, 2016: 18.)

The size of the student parliament depends on what is stated on the rules of the union. As an example, the student union METKA has a parliament of 25 + 25 people (member + vice member) student union KAMO 21+21 people and student union LAMKO 15 + 10 people (METKA, 2016; KAMO 2015; LAMKO 2017). Student parliament is elected annually by an election in which the registered members of the union are eligible to vote. The elections generally occur in late autumn, either in October or in November. Students who are members of the union may run for the parliament. Based on the rules of the union and the number of personal votes, a person can either become a member or a vice-member of the parliament (SAMOK, 2016: 36-37). After the results of the election have been published, the newly elected parliament will gather for a formation meeting in which the new members of the parliament choose a chairperson and a vice-chairperson amongst themselves.

Based on the rules and practise of the union, the parliament gathers for a meeting regularly. In addition to the meetings, the parliament can be involved in other means as well, such as working groups and the election committee.

### 3.2 Tutoring and head tutoring

Tutoring is a service offered by the student union and, as mentioned in section 4.1, one of its revenue sources as the HEIs pay for the tutoring services. Depending on the student union, tutoring may occur as the following types: peer, sports, study or exchange tutoring. The role of a tutor is rather to be a trustful study companion than an authority. (METKA, a: 5-6.) However, in peer tutoring head tutors may act as an authority for the

tutors of certain degree programmes or campus as they coordinate the tutoring operations on their own area (METKA, 2017c).

As figure 2 illustrates, tutors are directly under the student union although the UAS acquires the service. The eligibility of becoming a tutor varies between the student unions across the country. For instance, according to the practices of student union METKA, all degree students of the UAS are eligible to apply for the different tutoring positions and the student union board elects the new tutors, and depending on the organisational structure, in cooperation with employees of the union. (METKA, 2017b; METKA, 2017c.)

### 3.3 Student association

An association can either be registered, unregistered or established by a law or a regulation. Registered associations or associations set by the law are entitled to act as independent legal entities. Until an association is registered, the managing people are legally responsible for the operations of the association. (Finnish Patent And Registration Office, 2014.) All registered associations must follow the Finnish Act for Associations. The act requires all registered associations to have at least a chairperson. (Yhdistyslaki, 1989.) However, for example the *Finnish Civic Association for Adult Learning (KSL)* (2017) highly recommends that the individual rules of the associations would determine other compulsory positions for the board, such as vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer in order to clarify and rationalize overall operations.

Student associations are relatively similar to student unions. Both entities represent students in a HEI and operate for the benefit of students. The boards of both organisations have meetings as regularly as is determined on the rules of the organisations and members of the organisation are eligible to run for the board positions. Furthermore, the board members manage responsibility areas during their period. Generic areas of responsibility in a student association may include for example culture, events and membership services. (HTO ry; Atkins ry, 2017.)

Student associations operate on a more moderate level, as they for example do not contribute as actively in municipal influencing as student unions contribute. The operations are managed solely by the board, unlike in the two-levelled student union. Whereas a student union represents all the students within the institution, student associations usually represent students on a certain field of study. As an example, in Tampere UAS

the student association *Tampereen Tradenomiopiskelijat ry (TTO ry)* represents exclusively the BBA students in the institution. (TTO ry, 2017.) However, a student association may also represent the students of a certain campus (“campus association”), such as the *Students of Metropolia Myyrmäki (MeMO)* (2017). As figure 2 indicates, a student association can be connected to both a student union of the UAS and a national level student union on the labour union side or exclusively to either of them.

### 3.3.1 Guild

The operations of a guild are in many aspects similar to the tasks of a student association. Guilds offer various services for its members, supervise their rights in the UAS and are managed by a board (TROK 2017a; TTO 2017). The core difference between a guild and a student association is that guilds tend to be more degree program targeted. For instance, the *TUAS Construction Students' Guild* (TROK) represent the students of Civil Engineering and Construction Management degree programs whereas the *Turun Insinööriopiskelijat* (TIO) embodies the students from all the engineering degree programmes in Turku UAS. (TIO ry, 2017; TROK, 2017a.) Furthermore, a guild can be connected to a national level student union or a UAS student union or to both, as figure 1 presents. TROK, for example, is connected to the trade union Pro and through it to the Students of Trade Union Pro, a national level student union (TROK, 2017b).

However, some student organisations contain the term guild (“kilta” in Finnish) on their official name, although they represent all the students from a certain study field. As an example, the BBA student association in Rauma is titled *Rauman Liiketalousopiskelijain Kilta ry* (RLO Kilta) and the one in Joensuu is *Joensuun Tradenomiopiskelijoiden Kilta ry* (Kilta). This might be due to their long history, both guilds being over 100 years old. (Kilta, 2016; RLO Kilta 2017.) Generally, guilds are more common within the Finnish university environment (teekkari.fi, 2015).

### 3.4 Committee

The Act for Universities of Applied Sciences (2014, s.19) obliges all UASs to uphold at least the examination committee for which students may address complains about study related issues, such as evaluations of a course or assignment (HELGA, b). The Act for

Student Allowance<sup>2</sup> requires UASs to establish a Financial Aid Committee which, for example, gives statements about students' academic progress for the *Social Insurance Institution of Finland* (Kela) (Opintotukilaki, 1994 s.9).

The student union appoints representatives for all the committees and may launch application campaigns through which the students of the UAS can apply for the positions (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014, s.6(41); METKA, 2016). Furthermore, as figure 2 portrays, the committees are slightly detached from the student union because their functions are managed by a member of staff of the UAS rather than the board. However, as the board nominates the representatives, a minor connection nevertheless exists. Other examples of committees are, for instance, a scholarship committee and a board of legal rights (HELGA, b; METKA, 2017d).

### 3.5 Board of the university of applied sciences

According to the University of Applied Sciences Act, the student union must appoint a student representative for board of the UAS, in addition to the examination committee. The tasks of the UAS board include, for instance, deciding on the core targets of the overall and financial operations and outline future operative plans. (Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014 s.2(15-16), s.6(41)). The student representative is an equal board member and withholds the same rights and liabilities as the other members of the board (SAVOTTA, 2016).

As pointed in figure 2, the board of the UAS is separated from the student union operations. However, as with the committees, a slight connection exists since the board and the parliament are involved in the selection process.

### 3.6 National student organisation

National level student organisations can be divided into three groups: independent, labour union related and political. On the national level, student organisations are not tied solely to one specific institution of higher education whereas student unions, guilds and associations are. The organisations serve as managerial or guiding authorities for all its

---

<sup>2</sup> Opintotukilaki

members/member organisations throughout the operational area. Moreover, the subjects addressed on the national level are generally broader and more abstract than on the local level (Paajanen, 2017).

### 3.6.1 University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland – SAMOK

*University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland* (SAMOK) is politically independent national student organisation which represents the students in Finnish UASs and functions as the umbrella organisation for all the student unions. As figure 2 illustrates, SAMOK is directly linked with student unions. In addition, SAMOK may cooperate with other national level student unions. (SAMOK, 2017b). The organisation promotes the students' rights and ensures that their voice is constantly present with national decision making authorities and appropriate stakeholders. The organisation is managed by the yearly elected student board and the sectoral employees. (SAMOK a; SAMOK, d; SAMOK 2017c.)

As in student unions and associations, the board members of SAMOK have their own responsibility areas, such as international affairs, municipal influencing, student health care and society relations (SAMOK, 2017c). The weekly workload of the board members may be nearly equivalent to a full-time job (Paajanen, 2017).

### 3.6.2 Labour union related

On the labour union side, national student organisations are dependent on the “mother union”, unlike SAMOK. Whereas SAMOK concentrates on students' rights and wellbeing during their study time, labour union related national student organisations emphasise the degrees' connections with working life and students' rights as current and future employees in addition to the regular student advocacy (IL, 2015; SAMOK, 2017). Furthermore, certain organisations maintain sectoral student culture, for example in the form of events and cultural objects (caps, rings etc.) (IL, 2015). As most of the previously mentioned positions of trust, labour union related student organisations are managed by a student board and usually have a few employees (TROL, a).

As presented on figure 2, labour union related national student organisation may be connected to a student association in a UAS. As an example, the *National Union of BBA*



*Students* (TROL) has so called “local member associations” in nearly every UAS and the *Finnish Union of Engineering Students* (IOL) one in every UAS that offers engineering degrees (IL, 2015; TROL, b).

### 3.6.3 Political

The core difference between political and other national student organisations is the member structure. National political student organisations consist of students from both universities and UAS (Tuhatkunta, n.d.). Examples of national political student organisations are *Social and Democratic Students in Finland* (SONK), *Student Union of National Coalition Party* (Tuhatkunta) and *Student Union of the Central Party* (KOL)<sup>3</sup> (Finnish Civil Society, n.d.)

The operations follow the agenda of a political party, unlike in SAMOK for example, and the organisations cooperate closely with the original political party. (SONK, 2017a; Tuhatkunta, n.d.) Furthermore, the political student organisations tend to have several member associations across the country (SONK, 2017b; Tuhatkunta, n.d.). Thus, the organisational structure is relatively similar to the one with national labour union student organisations.

### 3.7 Others

The positions of trust are not limited to the most common ones presented above. Each position may have, for example, additional working groups centred on a certain matter or task. As a more concrete example, in Vaasa UAS student representatives have been named into monthly degree program-sectoral meetings, in addition to the regular positions of trust existing in student associations, committees, student union etc. (VAMOK, n.d.) Furthermore, other positions may exist depending on the needs and rules of the position in question.

---

<sup>3</sup> Keskustan opiskelijaliitto

## 4 Research methods

Lewis et. al. (2012: 680) define research as “the systematic collection and interpretation of information with a clear purpose, to find things out”. As mentioned in section 4, this thesis examines how volunteering in positions of trust during studies affects in working life context. The data was collected from current and previous student trustees. Therefore, the research has a smooth process vision and the data collected a clear interpretation purpose.

### 4.1 Research types

Researches can be divided in three core types: exploratory, descriptive and causal (or “explanatory”). Main characteristics of exploratory research are its flexible and evolving approach on the process. The core target is to understand phenomena with such nature that is complicated to measure. The type is especially convenient when the intention is to elucidate general understanding of a certain problem. Furthermore, as the research approach is evolving, the researcher ought to be prepared to change the direction because of newly appeared data and insight gained. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 171.)

In descriptive type the object is to achieve accurate outline events or people, for example. The researcher must have a clear understanding about the target phenomenon prior to the data collection process. Causal type aims to attain evidence about the relationship of two independent variables, such as marketing and sales (cause-and-effect relationships). (Lewis, et al., 2012: 171-172.)

The primary research type in this study was the exploratory type as the topic of the research question is largely abstract and author aimed to clarify the topics related to the problem. Furthermore, descriptive and causal types did not match with the research process as the author was not profoundly familiar with the issues beforehand and the research question is not directly connected to the relationship of two variables.

### 4.2 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

Quantitative research approach examines numerically, mathematically or statistically connections between different variables. The main focus is on numerical data collection

and generalizing it throughout target groups or to describe specific phenomena. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 162-163.) To simplify, the core target is to define the correlation between an independent variable and dependent variable within a group.

Quantitative research approach offers answers for numerical-type questions, such as “how many”, “how often” and “how much”. Furthermore, the sizes of target groups and the number of respondents are usually quite large for the data to be correctly generalizable. Examples of techniques in quantitative research are questionnaires, observation and collection of secondary data. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 161-163.)

The target of qualitative research is to examine the behaviour and actions of a certain target group and the motives that lead to them. The sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small as the research focuses on the in-depth data gathering and thus the results of the research are not as generalizable as in with quantitative method. Examples of methods in qualitative research are interviews, focus groups and observations. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 163-164.)

Although the design of a research would be defined as qualitative, numerical-related questions are not necessarily out of the question. Numerical-based inquiries might, in fact, reveal various schemes of social actions. However, numerical questions should not be the leading factor in a qualitative research but rather be on a supportive role. (Saldana, 2011: 77.)

#### 4.3 Mixed methods approach

Depending on the general layout, the research process may involve features or even independent stages from both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The combination may provide the researcher wider opportunities and perspectives to answer the initial research question. Moreover, utilizing both tactics may reveal connections or correlations that otherwise would not have been discovered in a mono method research. This particular combination of both approaches is referred as “mixed methods research”. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 165-169.)

This study includes a qualitative and quantitative research phase, the semi-structured interviews and the online questionnaire, thus transferring it into a mixed methods re-

search process. The results of the qualitative research phase were used generate guidelines for the following the quantitative part. The findings of both phases were combined and compared in the conclusion. Hence, the design of the approach can be further elaborated as a sequential exploratory research (Lewis, et al., 2012: 167-168).

#### 4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

When conducting a semi-structured interview, the researcher has created a list of themes and/or specified questions to cover. If the interview phases consist of several separate interviews, the researcher may modify the list between the interviews, for example by adding extra questions and changing the order of the questions, as the structure of the method is non-standardised. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews offer primary, first-hand data for the researcher as the topics are covered in-depth with the interviewees. Moreover, the interview situation may transfer into a conversation-situation-like if additional questions are created based on how the interviewee has responded to the previous question. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 374-379.)

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method in the qualitative part of the study as its flexible standard suited the data collection the best. The author interviewed three experts from student organisation field and interview guide was updated for each individual session.

#### 4.3.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are a typical method when conducting a research. Questionnaires should be well-organised and have a clear structure as they improve the respondents experience about questionnaire and further assist in minimizing errors. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 420.) Furthermore, dividing the questions into determined themes and placing the open-ended questions at the end of the form support achieving a distinct structure (Lewis, et al., 2012: 432-434).

The second part of this research was conducted as an online questionnaire as one of its main benefits is that possibility to gain a high coverage of respondents (Lewis, et al., 2012: 454). Moreover, an online option was the least time consuming method to gather

data from students and alumni both across the country and degree programs. The platform used for the questionnaire was E-lomake, a free online platform for students in Metropolia and familiar to author beforehand. The questionnaire was distributed in several social media channels and further into alumni groups of TROL and IOL and into the internal communication channel of SAMOK.

Questions on the form were divided into six categories: background information, graduation, positions of trust, career and job searching, effects concerning working life and additional comments. Short multiple choice questions were placed into the beginning of the form or into the beginning of each category. Most of the open-ended questions were at the end of the questionnaire. The more “demanding” and in-depth thinking involving questions should be located on the final parts of questionnaires as they require more effort from the respondents and thus may be more time consuming (Lewis, et al., 2012: 444).

#### 4.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are data quality issues which each research should consider prior conducting the actual research. Reliability refers to the situation whether a similar research outcome would be revealed by additional researchers examining the same issue. In an interview situation reliability can be improved by minimising the three crucial biases: interviewer bias, interviewee bias and participation bias. Validity concerns around the accurate measurement of the issue that was intended to be measured. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 381-384, 429.) The research phase consisted of two entities, the issues should be scrutinized for both stages.

The interviewer must remain calm and neutral during all the interviews and maintain a relaxed tone. Non-verbal behavior is something that may be observed by external inspector, thus the interviewees responses may have been affected by the authors movements or facial expressions, for instance. Moreover, the interviewer must conduct the interviews without any prejudices or presumptions. From the interviewee perspective, the responses may have been affected the interviewee’s sensitiveness on certain topic and hence would not reveal everything about the topic, for example. Participation bias did not occur with the interviews as all interviewees personally agreed to be interviewed. Furthermore, a high level of validity can be ensured by a consistent basework for the

interview guide and by covering various topics from different angles. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 381-382)

For the questionnaire, reliability can be ensured by designing the online form without any presumptions about the topic. The questions should be written with clear and consistent language. However, as there were two separate forms, some bias may occur regardless of the clear translations. In addition, in every questionnaire there is always a chance that the respondents will misunderstand the question. Furthermore, a clear layout and dividing the questions into several themes supports validity and all the questions on the form should have a clear connection to the research question. (Lewis, et al., 2012: 429-431.)

## **5 Interviews**

In order to collect primary data for the study and background information for the questionnaire, the author interviewed three people who have previous experience in various positions of trust and are currently active on a national level student union. The interviews were semi-structured interviews (please see section 4.3.1) and implemented in a café in Helsinki on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 2017. The interviews were conducted in Finnish due to convenience reasons. The author recorded the interviews and produced a transcript. Table 4 presents the background information of the interviewees. All three interviewees mentioned that the topic of the study has not been researched by their current student organisation. Please see appendix 1 for the interview guide

### **5.1 Accreditation**

All three interviewees agreed that the students do not receive enough accreditation concerning the volunteering by the staff of UASs. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process through which a student may compensate a course or a part of it by, in one way or another, portraying the experience and skills related to the topic and thus receive the credits without completing the actual course (Haaga-Helia, 2017).

The interviewees also summarized that the rules and practices concerning accreditation vary significantly between UAS and that HEIs should have common standards for the

accreditation process. Härkönen, for example, has been able to receive approximately 25-30 credits whereas Koli mentions that in some UASs students receive only six credits.

Table 4. Background information of interviewees.<sup>4</sup>

Name and field of study	Current position	Positions of trust	Experience in years
<b>Miihkali Härkönen,</b> <i>engineering</i>	Chairperson of <i>The Finnish Union of Engineering Students (IOL)</i> Board member of <i>Union of Professional Engineers in Finland (IL)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutor + head tutor</li> <li>• Member of board in a student association</li> <li>• Vice-chairperson and chairperson of a student association</li> <li>• Member + Chairperson of student parliament</li> <li>• Chairperson of a national level student union (IOL)</li> </ul> + board member in a national labor union (IL)	3+
<b>Veera Koli,</b> <i>business</i>	Chairperson of <i>The National Union of BBA Students – TROL (TROL)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vice-member + member + chairperson of board in a student association</li> <li>• Member of board in student parliament + chairperson of a student parliamentary group</li> <li>• Member of board + chairperson in a national level student union (TROL)</li> <li>• Member of a student committee of a leading labor union (Akavan opiskelijaaluetuuskunta)</li> </ul>	4+
<b>Emmi Paajanen,</b> <i>business</i>	<i>Board member of the University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland – SAMOK</i> <i>Board member of local political student association</i> <i>Specialist board member of national level political student organisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member + chairperson of the board of student association</li> <li>• Vice-chairperson of student parliament</li> <li>• Chairperson of student union</li> </ul>	3+

Some UASs offer official courses which focus solely on volunteering or positions of trust, for example in Metropolia UAS students may receive up to 15 credits from these courses. In addition, Paajanen mentioned that the faculties within the UAS may have their own accreditation practices. Both Koli and Paajanen emphasized the importance of the work and amount of relevant experience especially business students gain by completing actual tasks relevant to studies prior graduating, for example in student associations.

In addition, Paajanen mentioned that one of the possible reasons why there is such a large extent of variation with the accreditation practices between UASs may be the staffs' lack

---

<sup>4</sup> Experience in years refers to the experience gained during higher education studies.

of knowledge about the positions of trust. Moreover, the UAS staff neither have a sufficient amount of information about the concrete contents of each position.

Furthermore, the interviewees were asked that had they encountered positive working life promotion connected with positions of trust but neither of the interviewees had not encountered such issue. Härkönen had rather come across with mentions of the positive connection while recruiting new volunteers, for instance. Koli had thought herself that positions of trust would generate a positive impression about CV, for example. Paajanen mentioned that she had acknowledged the possible benefits from previous experiences as she had volunteered in positions of trust already in high school. Hence, the promotion or lack of positive working life connection was not an essential factor for her to start volunteering in student activities in UAS. However, Paajanen also argues that the positive working life promotion should be articulated more widely.

## 5.2 Amount of work

All three interviewees mentioned that the amount of work in student associations, unions or other organisations depends on how active the operations are. Larger and more active associations/organisations tend to require nearly full-time commitment especially from the chairperson and from board members approximately 2 days in a week may be sufficient. However, on the student union side board members can be expected a nearly full-time commitment as they might receive financial remuneration monthly. Furthermore, Paajanen and Koli additionally pointed out that the amount of work is relative on the volunteer's attitude and decision on how much one is willing give effort for the position. In addition, Paajanen also noted that during the past two years the monetary remuneration received from the organisations she has represented has enabled her full-time commitment for the positions.

Furthermore, all three agreed that students complete the tasks related to their positions of trust on their free time and according to Koli, free-time is especially used during the first weeks of each semester. Härkönen mentioned that as a chairperson of a student association, he practically completed tasks during both free and study time but his board members were able operate mostly outside of lecture hours. On the contrary, Paajanen had marked herself as "absent" during the year she was the chairperson of a student union and hence, did not feel that she was exploiting her free time to manage the operations.



The interviewees were asked to estimate their current work load in comparison with full-time job. Härkönen evaluated his weekly workload to be at least 20 hours which might vary depending on is he travelling on duty or not. Härkönen also completes approximately 20 hours in his job each week. Koli estimated her average workload to total 15 hours in a week. However seasonal differences occur and she states that the autumn will most likely be busier. Moreover, Koli mentioned that she might not even notice working while answering emails, for instance, on her free time. The work load of Paajanen is highly equivalent to a full-time job. In addition, as the board members of SAMOK work in pairs with the specialists of the organisation, people are expected to be present at the office as well.

### 5.3 Reasons for participating

According to Härkönen, there are two main reasons why students volunteer in positions of trust: sense of community and the willingness to influence matters within the institution. Additionally, some might consider positions of trust as a value adding aspect on their CVs and therefore engage themselves in such activities. Koli mentioned similar two motives: some students are social and want to be part of a group and some are more interested in influencing the decision-making process concerning students and the study environment.

According to Paajanen, anyone who is engaged in a position of trust wants to influence matters within the operating environment in one way or another. She has noticed that the ones who participate in student activities for the first time enjoy tasks which lead to concrete results the most, such as event management and planning. Paajanen, too, mentioned the social aspect of volunteering in positions of trust. However, when moving to the national level students may be more attracted to influencing larger matter and entities which are more abstract, such as the social and health care services renewal in Finland<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> SOTE-uudistus.

#### 5.4 Educational deficit

By educational deficit the author referred to a situation in where the knowledge acquired from studies is not enough to manage as professionals in working life after graduation. Concerning the concept, the respondents were asked “*Can acting in a position of trust compensate educational deficit?*”

Härkönen mentioned that a person’s initiative is especially an attribute that develops while volunteering in positions of trust. Koli stated that in positions of trust, students receive experience on areas that may not even be covered on the regular curricula. Paajanen mentioned that, personally, she has learned more while participating in student organisation work than on the regular lectures. As a concrete example, she explained that after personally completing recruitment processes in certain position, she has felt that her expertise on managing the process is firmly stronger than a recently graduated HR BBA’s proficiency.

#### 5.5 Requirements of current working life

The interviewed were asked to describe what kind of professionals current working life requires. Härkönen mentioned project and team working skills and project management skills as important attributes in an employee. In addition, he emphasized the importance of initiative and in general employees who do not require constant instruction on work. Koli discussed the vast variety of general skills, international expertise and social skills as important attributes for current employees. She also mentioned that as a BBA, it is beneficial to contain expertise on several fields as the degree is adaptable on several fields. According to Paajanen, the key characteristics are multi-tasking, ability to work under pressure and the willingness to develop personal expertise.

When asked “*Is bare sectoral expertise sufficient in the current working life?*” both Härkönen and Koli stated that it was dependent on the field. Härkönen presented an example on the engineering side: in the construction field sectoral expertise is enough to manage whereas on the IT field coding specialist might not receive enough information from regular studies. Koli mentioned that on the BBA side accounting graduates, for instance, may manage with the knowledge only concerning accounting. However, she also mentioned that, in general, employees are required to have a variety of social skills and to be flexible with the tasks.

Paajanen, on the other hand, stated that bare sectoral expertise is not enough as one might not know what will happen to the business 5-10 years from now. Employees should maintain and develop additional expertise that will benefit the employer when one's expertise becomes "out of date". Furthermore, she mentioned an example concerning her own studies. Although she is BBA student specialising in HR, she should develop herself in communications related tasks, for instance.

## 5.6 Benefits for students

The interviewees were asked what were their personal perceptions about benefits in working life context. According to Härkönen, who also manages recruitments, employers value concrete evidence about initiative and eagerness towards work. Teamworking skills develop especially if one is part of a board as the members closely cooperate throughout the year. Moreover, as board members usually have had their own responsibility areas to maintain and develop, such people may present exceptional initiative at work as they simply do not complete task but also search for new and develop additional approaches.

Koli mentioned that volunteering in positions of trust offers various forms of benefits, such as the development of financial, social and organizing skills. Moreover, the work completed in positions of trust may develop the general working life practices as students may not necessarily gain much work experience during studies.

Paajanen mentioned that leadership experience (mentally) grows the person. When one has the chance the work with matters that, for instance, relate to future career objects, the experience will be beneficial. If a person is career oriented, one should consider throughout whether to engage in positions of trust or plan carefully how to proceed with a sense of direction. In addition, Paajanen states that recruiters should be more aware of the positions of trust job seekers have engaged in whereas simultaneously the job seekers themselves should be able to present the experience gained for the recruiters.

## 6 Research findings

The second part of the active research phase was implemented as an online questionnaire between 19<sup>th</sup> June and 16<sup>th</sup> July. The target groups were both current and former

students who had volunteered in at least one position of trust during their UAS studies, regardless of their field of study. The form was distributed via the author's social media channels and certain acquaintances were asked to further share the questionnaire into the internal communication channels of SAMOK, TROL and IOL. None of the questions were marked as compulsory ones, hence the number of responses varies between the questions. In addition, some respondents chose not to answer the open-ended questions. Please see appendices 2 and 3 for the questionnaires in Finnish and in English.

The author did not determine exact target response rate as there is not any official information concerning the total number of volunteers in the student activity environment, although a rough estimate is around 1 000. Moreover, there was no guarantee how many people would be willing to distribute the questionnaire prior starting the active research phases. Nevertheless, the author set an initial target number of responses to be 50 at the minimum.

## 6.1 Demographics

The Finnish version of the questionnaire received 148 responses and the English version 0 responses in total. As mentioned in section 1.4, non-native Finnish speakers are a minority within the student organisation environment. The author offered five different age categories on the questionnaire: *under 20*, *20-24*, *25-29*, *30-34* and *35 or older*. As presented on figure 3, the largest age groups were *20-24* and *25-29*-year-olds. Only a handful of the respondents were *30-34*-year-olds or *35 or older*. None of the respondents were *under 20*.

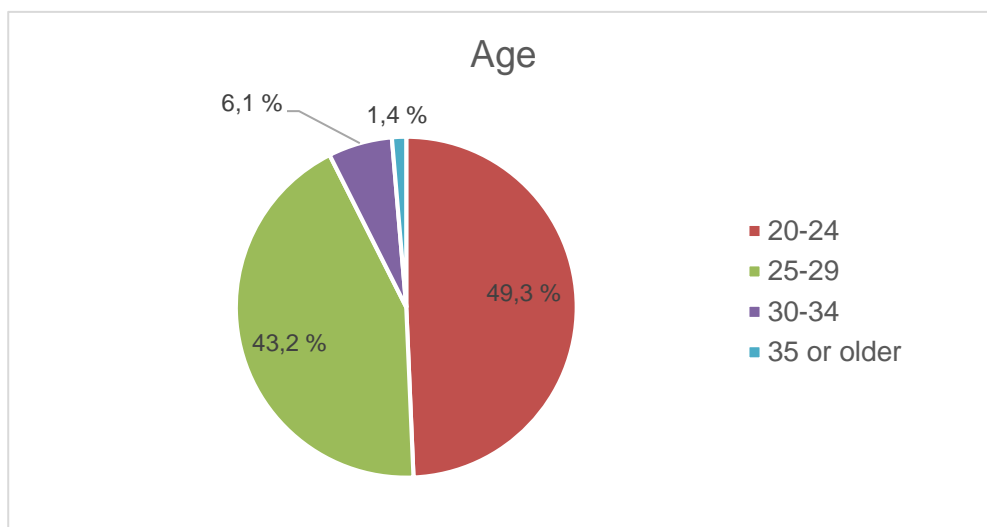


Figure 3. Age distribution of respondents. (N=148)

The respondents were offered four possible gender options: *man*, *woman*, *other* and *I don't want to tell*. The author felt that it was essential to include the option “*other*” due to the current discussion around the topic of gender neutrality. Figure 4 portrays the gender distribution of the respondents. Slight dispersion can be noted from the results as 57.4 % of the respondents were women in total. 1.4 % chose not to express their gender and none of the respondents chose the option “*other*”.

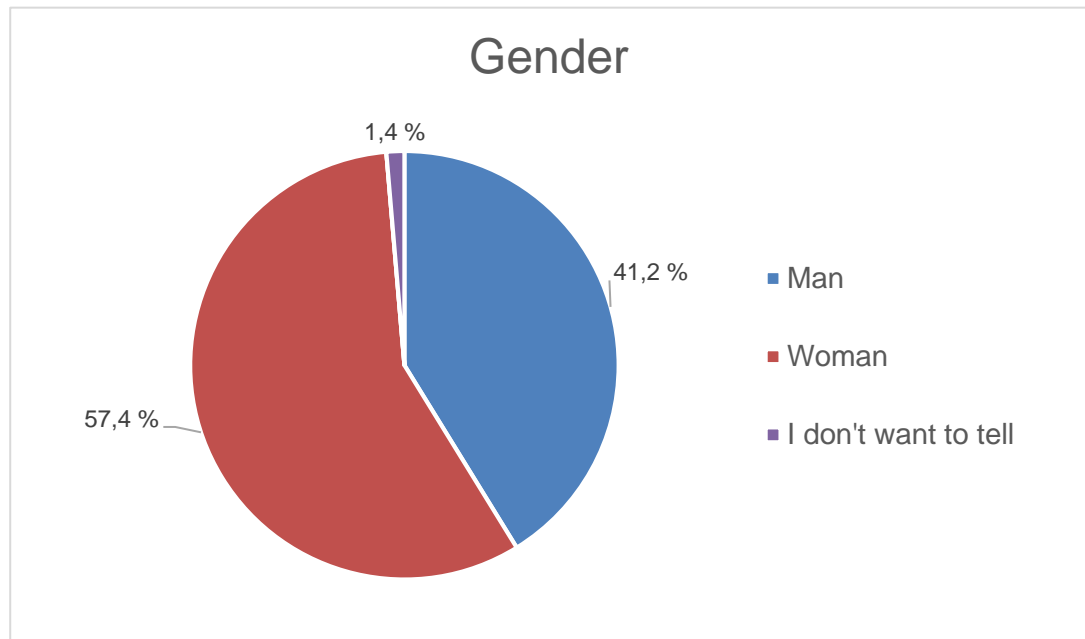


Figure 4. Gender distribution of respondents. (N=148)

## 6.2 Educational background

As the target population consisted of both current and former volunteers in positions of trust, the respondents were asked question concerning their education background in terms of graduation and field of study. As presented on figure 5, the majority of the respondents, 66.9 %, had not yet graduated and 33.1 % had an UAS degree. Furthermore, the graduated ones were asked specify their graduation year. The variation of graduation year was between 2009 and 2017. Some error occurred with this question as few respondents had specified their *estimated* year of graduation although they had marked themselves as not graduated.

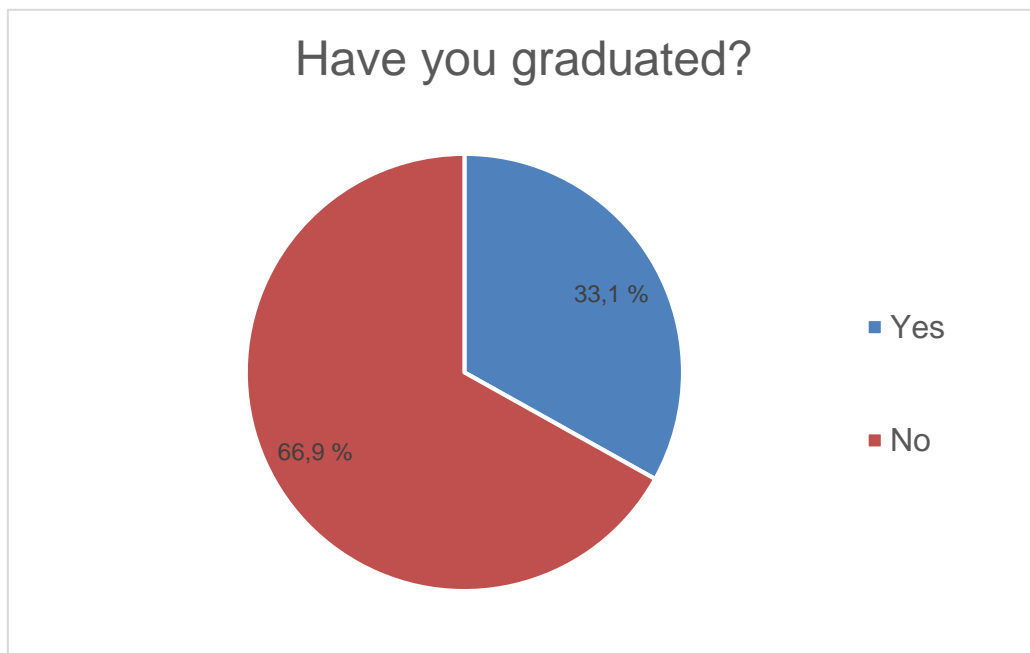


Figure 5. Distribution of graduation. (N=148)

The distribution of responses is properly visible on figure 6, which indicates the fields of study of the respondents. The author initially had seven categories on the form which presented the main fields of studies in the UAS environment: business, engineering, social services and health care, culture, hotel and/or restaurant, tourism and other. The respondents were asked to choose the field during which they had most recently volunteered in positions of trust. Business and engineering students represent the majority of the respondent population with 47.3 % and 27.4 % respectively. None of the respondents were from the field of tourism.

The “*business*” category was meant to represent all the programs that lead to a BBA degree, including the specified degree programmes such as IT, sales and finance management. However, this had caused confusion among the respondents as few had categorized themselves as “other” but on to the specification field written, for example, IT and sales. Excluding the confusion, the “other” group includes smaller study fields such as sustainable development and humanistic studies.

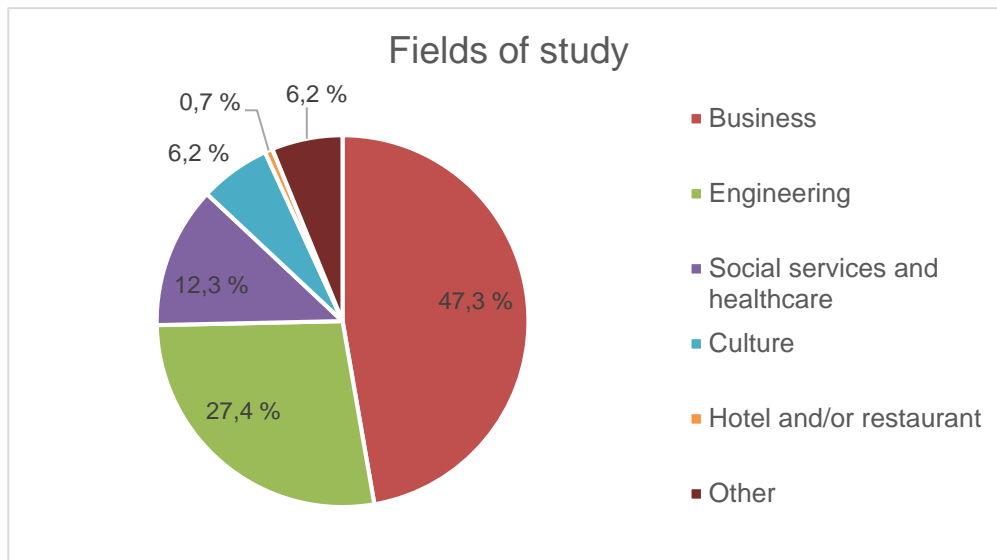


Figure 6. Fields of study. (N=146)

Furthermore, the respondents were asked whether the volunteering has delayed their graduation. This is relevant as UASs have clear target durations which fluctuate between 3.5 and 4.5 years depending on the degree programme (Opintopolku, b). In addition, 46 % of the funding of the UASs is based on number of completed degrees, e.g. graduates (Opetushallitus, n.d.). As can be noted from figure 7, the respondents are quite evenly distributed between the two options, with 50.3 % stating that their graduation has not been delayed by engaging in positions of trust. Hence, precisely clear deductions cannot be conducted from the responses.

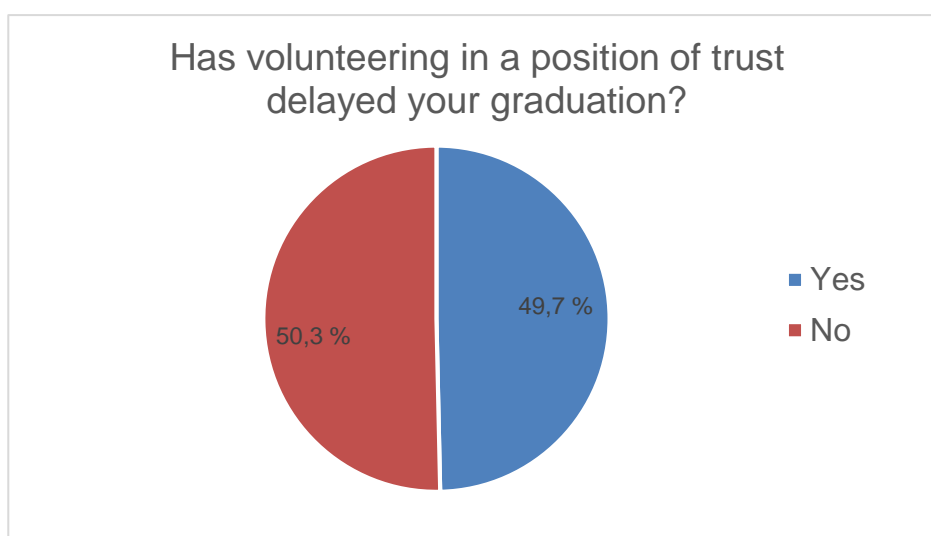


Figure 7. Question 5. *Has volunteering in a position of trust delayed your graduation?* (N=145)

Furthermore, few of the respondents pointed out that although their graduation had been delayed, volunteering in positions of trust was only one of the reasons in the group of several other factors. Hence, they did not concern it as a crucial factor for the overall situation of the delay.

### 6.3 Positions of trust

The relevant positions of trust were defined in section 3. On questionnaire, respondents were offered 20 different positions to select from (a respondent could choose more than one position). Guilds, student associations, student unions and national level student organisations had separate options for member/vice member, vice-chairperson and chairperson of the board as the task or responsibilities may vary between the positions. The options mentioning national level student organisations represented SAMOK, labour union related and political student organisations in common.

Table 5. Question 6. In which of the following positions of trust have volunteered? (N=148)

	Number of responses	Significant percentage
Chairperson of board in a student guild (Kilta)	1	0,7 %
Vice-chairperson of board in a student guild (Kilta)	1	0,7 %
Chairperson of board in a national level student organisation	4	2,7 %
Member/vice-member of board in a student guild (Kilta)	5	3,4 %
Vice-chairperson of board in a national level student organisation	8	5,4 %
Vice-chairperson of student parliament	10	6,8 %
Member of board of the university of applied sciences	11	7,4 %
Chairperson of board in a student union	13	8,8 %
Chairperson of student parliament	14	9,5 %
Vice-chairperson of board in a student union	20	13,5 %
Member/vice-member of board in a national level student organisation	26	17,6 %
Other	26	17,6 %
Member of student allowance committee, board of legal rights etc.	37	25,0 %
Vice-chairperson of board in a student association	39	26,4 %
Head tutor	42	28,4 %
Chairperson of board in a student association	48	32,4 %
Member/vice-member of board in a student union	50	33,8 %
Member/vice-member of student parliament	74	50,0 %
Tutor	104	70,3 %
Member/vice-member of board in a student association	107	72,3 %
Number of respondents (N)	148	100,00 %

Table 5 presents the frequencies of each option. The most common positions were *member/vice member of board in a student association* and *tutor* with 72.3 % and 70.3 %



respectively. The least common positions were *chairperson* and *vice-chairperson of board of board in a student guild* with 0.7 % each.

Furthermore, positions as board members appear to be more common than the chairing positions. For instance, 50.0 % of the respondents had acted as board member whereas 13.5 % had served as a vice-chairperson and only 8.8 % as chairpersons in a student union. Based on the responses, the option “*other*” includes, for example, negotiation committees, member of board of directors and board member in student sports organisation.

As mentioned in section 5.1, RPL is a procedure where students may transform the experience gained outside of regular studies into completion of course topics or even the entire course. In addition, students may receive credits straight from volunteering in positions of trust. The interviewees noted that the procedures vary between UASs, therefore the respondents were asked “*Have you managed to use the RPL procedures with your positions of trust or transfer them as credits into your degree?*”. As visible on figure 8, 60.8 % of the respondents had either been able to utilize RPL techniques or receive credits whereas 39.2 % had not. Therefore, the results support the arguments of the interviewees.

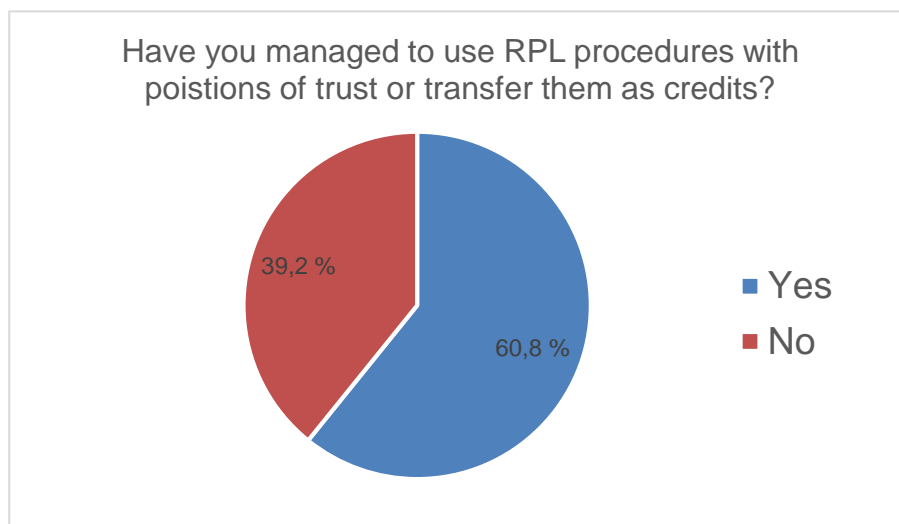


Figure 8. Question 7. *Have you managed to use the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) procedures with your positions of trust or transfer them as credits into your degree?* (N=148)

#### 6.4 Career and job searching

This theme perhaps the largest entity on the questionnaire and consisted of five questions in total. First, the respondents were asked have their positions of trust affected their career choice and, as presented on figure 9, the majority (68,2 %) stated that they had not caused any effect.

Furthermore, the respondents were requested to specify if they had answered yes. The specifications can be divided into three main themes: **1.** the person ended up or will aim for a job in the organisation/student organisation sector, **2.** the person ended up or the experiences gained have enforced the motivation to apply for managerial positions and **3.** the person has applied or will apply for such positions that relate to their responsibility areas as board members. Please see appendix 4 for the examples of the respondents' statements.

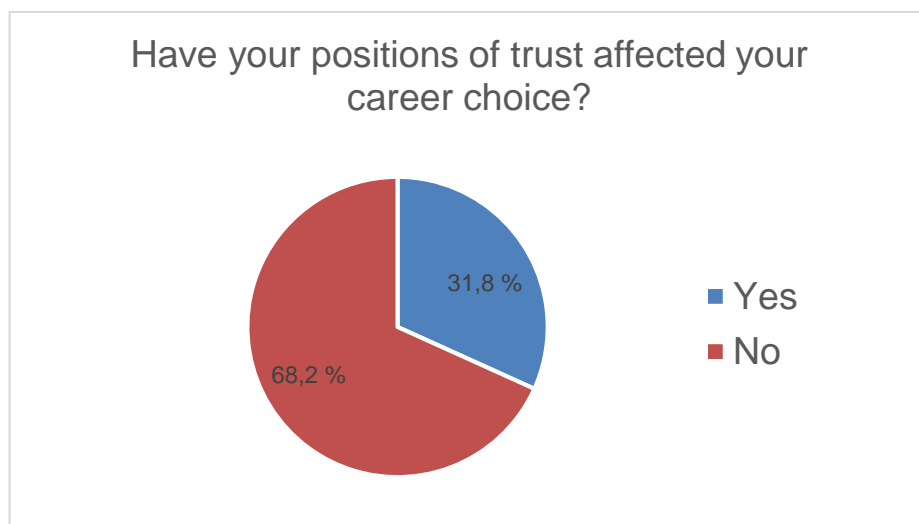


Figure 9. Question 8. Have your positions of trust affected your career choice? If yes, please specify briefly. (N=148)

Second, the respondents were whether volunteering in positions of trust has improved their job searching skills. As figure 10 indicates, 66.9 % of the respondents stated that the skills had improved because of positions of trust. Based on the respondents' specifications, the improvement may be divided into four categories: **1.** presenting and "selling" personal skills/experience for the employers, **2.** written expression on CVs and applications, **3.** self-confidence and social skills and **4.** networking skills.

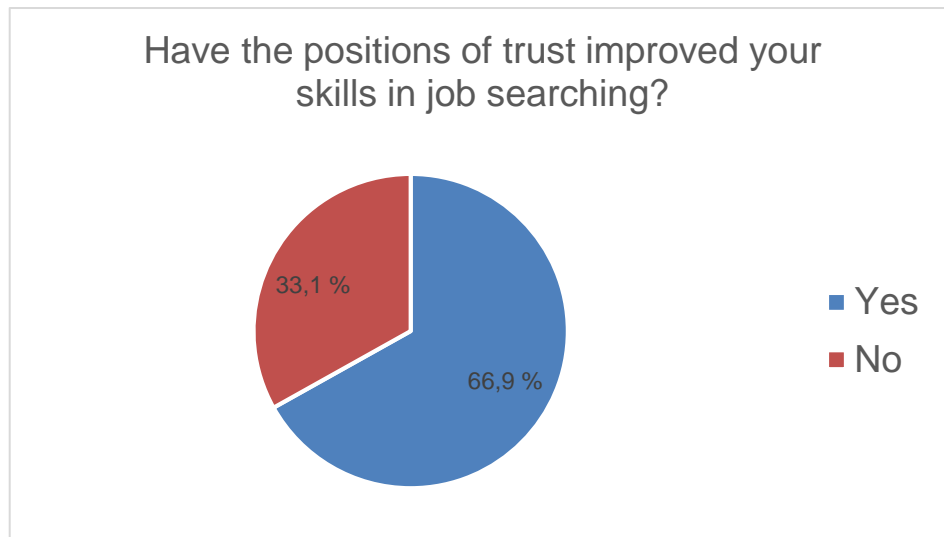


Figure 10. Question 9. *Have the positions of trust improved your skills in job searching? If they have, please specify briefly, how. (N=148)*

Furthermore, several respondents noted that after completing recruitments while acting on positions of trust, they gained understanding of the employer side. Thus, they understand on a wider aspect what employers seek from CVs or interviews, for instance. The following are examples of the specifications. Please see appendix 4 for the examples of the respondents' statements.

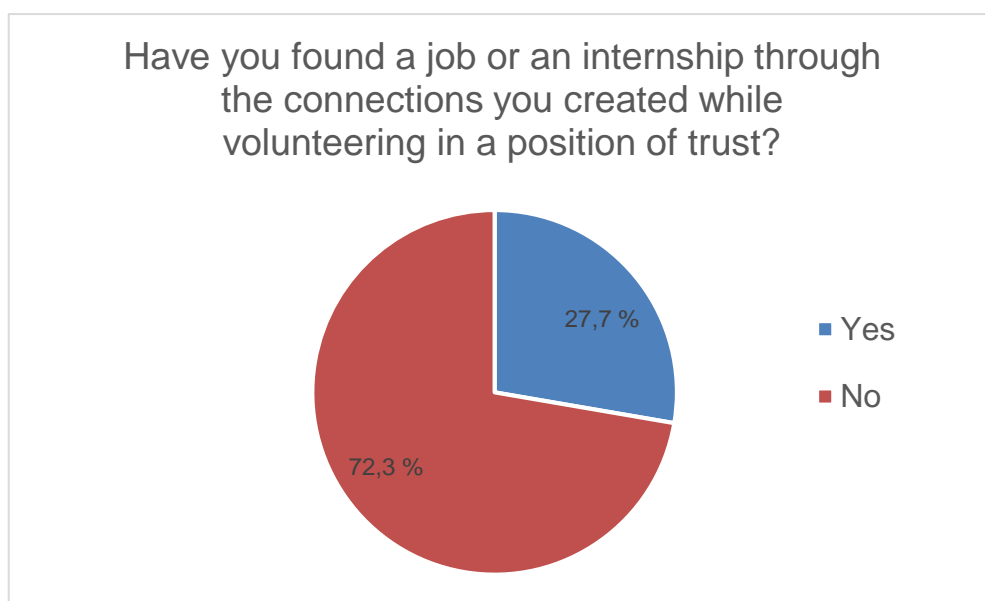


Figure 11. Question 10. *Have you found a job or an internship through the connections you created while volunteering in a position of trust? (N=148)*

Third, the respondents were asked had they found either a job or an internship through the connections created while being active on the positions of trust. Several respondents pointed out on the previous question that their job search skills had improved in terms of networking. However, as indicate on figure 11, only 27.7 % of the respondents had, in fact, landed with an internship or a job through the network created during their volunteering period.

Fourth, the respondents were asked on which stage of the job search process did they mention their positions of trust. The author had divided the process into six stages: *on my CV*, *on my application*, *in preliminary interview* (phone interview or equivalent), *in the official interview*, *elsewhere* and *not in any of the stages*. The respondents were able to choose more than one option.

As presented on figure 12, most of the respondents had mentioned the positions of trust either on their CV or in the official interview for the job. The rest of the options had relatively lower frequencies as less than 30 respondents had chosen one of the four other stages. For the specification of “*elsewhere*” the respondents have described that their

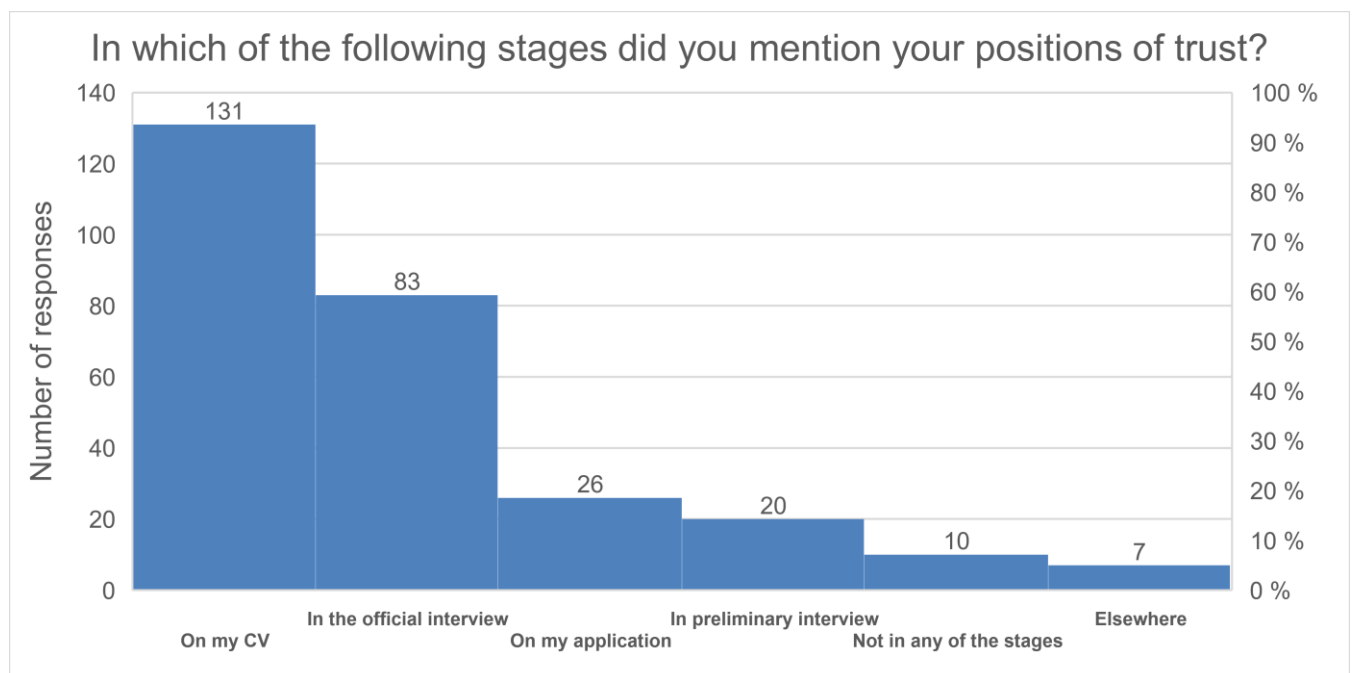


Figure 12. Question 11. *Try to memorize your most recent job search process. In which of the following stages of the process did you mention your positions of trust? (N=148)*

referees mentioned the positions for the recruiter, the recruiter knew the positions beforehand and one had mention the positions before sending an application, for instance. In addition, two of the respondents mentioned that they had not yet applied a job while volunteering on positions of trust.

Fifth, the respondents were requested to estimate the effect of mentioning the positions of trust on their most recent job search process. The respondents had five options to select from: *extremely positive effect*, *positive effect*, *no effect or I don't know*, *negative effect* and *extremely negative effect*. The majority of the respondents chose either extremely positive effect or positive effect, with 25.5 % and 44.1 % respectively, as visible on figure 13. Perhaps surprisingly, 1.4 % replied that the mentioning had had a negative effect on their job search process. None had felt that mentioning would have caused an extremely negative effect.

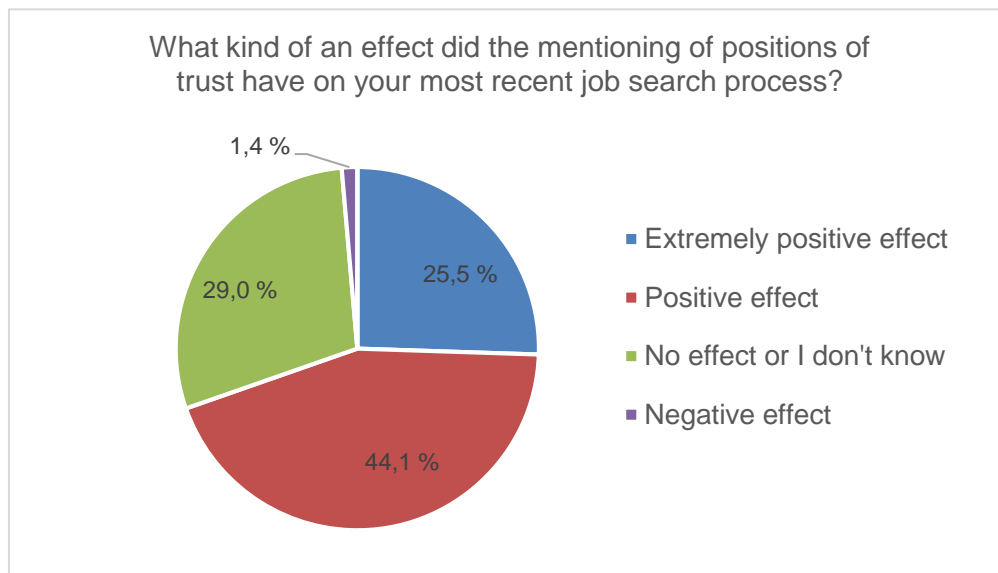


Figure 13. Question 12. *Try to estimate what kind of an effect did the mentioning of positions of trust have on your most recent job search process.* (N=145)

## 6.5 Effects concerning working life

The final part of the survey focused on the concrete effects that volunteering had caused for the respondents in working life context. First, the respondents were asked had their experiences caused benefits in working life as author could not assume anything. 91.2 % of the respondents stated that experiences had caused benefited them whereas 8.8 % stated the opposite. Thus, there appears to quite clear difference between the two

options. Furthermore, the respondents were requested to specify the details for their answer and table 6 presents the specifications for each field.

The responses are quite similar between the fields and, for instance, team work experience was a common reason for each field. Furthermore, the responses of business, engineering and culture field were even more similar with each other as experiences in presentations and meeting management were mentioned in addition to teamworking in all three fields.

Respondents from the business field tended to emphasize the benefit or practical work experience gained to through the volunteering and networking whereas on the engineering side the respondents perceived the benefits as better acknowledgement of personal strengths and understanding of wider perspectives in the working life. In addition, on the culture field the respondents also mentioned the growth of wider understanding. Respondents from social services and health care field emphasized, for instance, the improvement of self-confidence and understanding personal strengths.

Table 6. Question 13. *Have the experiences gained benefited you in working life? Please also specify why they have or haven't.*

<i>Have the experiences gained benefited you in working life?</i> <i>Specifications for the "Yes" answers.</i>				
Business (N=69)	Engineering (N=40)	Social services and health care (N=18)	Culture (N=9)	Other (N=9)
<b>Experience gained in:</b> - Teamworking (social skills) - Negotiations - Managerial tasks - Project management - Presentations - Meeting management - Administrative tasks - Initiative working  <b>Network created</b>  <b>Practical experience (not gained through studies)</b>	<b>Experience gained in:</b> - Managerial tasks - Teamworking (social skills) - Stress tolerance - Presentations - Meeting management - Negotiations  <b>Better understanding of personal strengths</b>  <b>Understand wider perspectives</b>	<b>Experience gained in:</b> - Social interaction and teamworking - Managerial tasks - Project management  <b>Understanding of work environment</b>  <b>Network created</b>  <b>Understanding of personal strengths</b>  <b>Improvement of self-confidence</b>	<b>Experience gained in:</b> - Presentations - Teamworking (social skills) - Event management - Networking - Meeting management  <b>Understand wider perspectives/entities</b>	<b>General knowledge of matters surrounding working life</b>  <b>Teamworking/ team management skills</b>  <b>Experience has led to other vacancies</b>  <b>Understand wider entities</b>

The respondents who chose the “No” option were either from business or engineering field. The specifications for the negative answers mainly contained statements such as “*I don’t know*” or that the respondent had not yet applied for a job while volunteering. In addition, one of the respondents pointed out that the organisational structure of a modern business is hardly ever as light as a student organisation might have. Please see appendix 4 for the examples of the respondents’ statements. (Respondents from hotel and/or restaurant field did not write any specifications for their answers.)

Second, the respondents explained in a more specific manner what were the skills they learned and/or improved while volunteering. As visible on table 7, the responses on each field were again quite similar with each other. Skills such as teamworking, leadership, meeting practicalities, networking and presentation skills appear to be the most common issues to have either been learned or improved.

Table 7. Question 14. *Which skills related to working life did you learn or improve while volunteering in a position of trust?*

Business (N=69)	Engineering (N=40)	Social services and health care (N=18)	Culture (N=9)	Other (N=9)
Teamworking	Management	Teamworking	Presentation skills	Teamworking
Social skills	Leadership	Management	Public speaking	Problem solving
Presentation skills	Event management	Leadership	Leadership	Networking
Public speaking	Meeting practicalities	Presentation skills	Giving feedback	Self-management
Management	Presentation skills	Public speaking	Prioritising	Sales
Leadership	Public speaking	Communications skills	Meeting practicalities	Teamworking
Lobbying	Financial management	Marketing	Communications	Managerial skills
Sales	Teamworking	Administrative skills	Lobbying	Subordinate skills
Budgeting	Project management	Financial management	Administrative skills	Communications
Accounting	Delegating work	Meeting practicalities	Managerial skills	Social media
Time management	Social skills	Graphic expression	Social media	Politics
Networking	Marketing	Project management	Project management	Society skills
Event management	Networking	Written expression	Argumentation	Leadership
Meeting practicalities	Negotiation skills	Training others	Source criticism	Negotiation skills
Communications skills	Taking responsibility	Working with different personalities	Problem solving	
Negotiation skills	Entrepreneurship skills			
Marketing	Sales			
Administrative business skills	Stress tolerance			
HR	General working life practices			
Educational politics	Prioritising			
Acting as an employer	Working with different personalities			
Problem solving				
Self-confidence				
Business contacting				

Furthermore, on the business field the respondents were slightly more specific with their answers as they, for instance, outlined quite narrowly the skills areas such as budgeting, accounting, HR and marketing. Other fields were not as specific with the skill areas. Teamwork, social skills and leadership appear to be the most popular areas from the soft skills category, however respondents from the culture and engineering field also brought up, for example, prioritising, source criticism and problem solving. Social service and health care field respondents were the only ones to mention other forms of communication skills than social media and presentation skills in general as they mentioned both graphic and written expression. (Respondents from hotel and/or restaurant field did not write any specifications for their answers.)

On the third and final question in this section the respondents were asked which two skills learned/improved of experiences gained had been to most beneficial for them so far. When compared with the previous questions some similarities can be noted from the responses. Soft skills, such as teamworking, leadership, networking and social skills appear in the responses of both questions. However, as can be noted from table 8, on the last question the respondents mentioned more factors from the hard skills category and the ratio between the is more even than on the previous one. As an example, technical skills such as presentation, communications, marketing and negotiation skills are present in almost every field category. In addition, several respondents from business, engineering and social service and health care field mentioned event management as one of the most beneficial gained working life attribute.

Furthermore, engineering and social service and health care fields mentioned as the most beneficial attributes such skills that are not perhaps regularly associated with the field. For instance, on the engineering field respondents mentioned graphic expression, marketing skills and public speaking whereas social service and health care field respondents brought up issues such as networking and financial management. Therefore, students may have gained cross-degree experience.

The respondents were asked to briefly explain why they chose the particular skills/experiences. One of the most common clarifications was that the practical experience about working life gained already during studies has prepared them for their work tasks. Furthermore, the experiences about leadership and management have furthered their work in managerial positions. Altogether, the respondents felt that they had expanded their



skill set with such attributes that would be truly valued in working life. Please see appendix 4 for the examples of the respondents' statements.

Table 8. Question 15. *Which skill learned/improved or experience gained while volunteering in a position of trust has benefited you the most in working life so far? Please mention at least two examples and explain briefly, how.*

Business (N=69)	Engineering (N=40)	Social services and health care (N=18)	Culture (N=9)	Other (N=9)
General organising skills	Marketing skills	Management	Project management	Team management
Event management	Managerial skills	Leadership	Networking	Meeting practicalities
Leadership	Networking	Networking	Social skills	Teamworking
Presentation skills	Understanding of personal strengths	Event management	Presentation skills	Project management
Influencing others	Presentation skills	Project management	Public speaking	Guidance experience
Communications skills	Self-confidence	Financial management	Negotiation skills	Meeting practicalities
Sales	Networking	Teamworking	Leadership	
Negotiation skills	Event management	Flexibility	Managerial skills	
Financial management	Social skills	Public speaking	Communications skills	
Time management	Project management	Stress tolerance		
Understanding of organisational work	Leadership	Communication skills		
Social skills	Graphic expression	Social skills		
Networking	Teamworking			
Meeting practicalities	Time management			
Negotiation skills	Meeting practicalities			
Partner relationship management	Sales			
Teamworking	Problem solving			
Managerial skills	Financial management			
Stress tolerance	Stress tolerance			
Public speaking	Public speaking			
Marketing skills	Flexibility			
	Negotiation skills			

## 7 Conclusion

Student volunteering occurs in several forms in the current UAS environment. Activities such as tutoring, being a board member in a student association or union or being a member of the student parliament offer the students the possibility to both widen their perspective about the study institution and to acquire additional skills and competences relevant for working life which, furthermore, is under a massive change. The number of jobs available remains relatively stable whereas the number of graduates rises, thus generating an unemployment problem for higher education graduates. Moreover, the competition for jobs simultaneously tightens.

Whereas employers still value the traditional technical skills related to one's job, such as subject matter expertise and computer skills, the role of soft skills, such as teamworking

and leadership skills, has tremendously increased during the past decade. Employees must have at least a relatively firm set of soft skills in order to manage in almost any kind of a job. Moreover, the better set of soft skills one withholds, the better chances one has to succeed in a job.

ECAs and volunteering during study time have been proven bring positive effects for students. Employers do value participation on ECAs and the experience gained from them but not perhaps on as wide level as they should. Especially in Finland employers appear to be quite uncertain concerning the positions of trust covered in this study, for instance. Furthermore, UAS staff across the country also appear to be dubious concerning the same matter as more than one third of the participants in the study had not been able apply RPL procedures with the positions of trust. In addition, the procedures tend to change between the institutions. Therefore, employers and UAS staff should familiarize themselves about both the most common positions of trust for students and what kind of experience one might gain from them. On the other hand, perhaps students themselves should bring the issue up more prominently for example during job interviews or in conversations with lecturers, for instance.

Volunteering in positions of trust appeared to affect one's perceived employability factors. Students were able to put the theory learned during lectures into practice while volunteering and thus, receive first-hand experience about situation similar to working already before graduation. This has enhanced their preferences on personal skills and knowledge and how to present it successfully in job application process. Furthermore, for some students volunteering might even create the career path they would like to follow.

The most important skills for working life the respondents had acquired from volunteering from positions of trust mostly tended to be from the soft skills category, regardless of the study field. Skills such as teamworking, leadership, negotiations, networking and social skills were among the most frequently mentioned issues as the most important attributes acquired from volunteering. However, respondents also valued hard technical skills, such as different fields of management, presentation skills and knowledge about current issues within the labour market. In addition, students were able to acquire skills that necessarily are not the most common traits for their own field. Altogether, the vast majority felt that volunteering in positions of trust during study time had caused a positive effect on their working life attributes.

Based on the research findings, the author would like to raise a question for the UASs across the country. As one of their main duties is to produce professionals closely attached with labour market, should the institutions perhaps encourage students to dynamically participate in the activities available? However, here one must also note that volunteering appears to delay graduation for some students which is a negative issue for the institutions. Therefore, UASs should carefully examine which option is more important for them: emphasize the importance of graduating in time and not encourage students to volunteer in positions of trust or offer them additional keys for working life success by encouraging them to volunteer in the positions of trust covered in this study.

### 7.1 Further recommendations

As the number of respondents from each field is not equal, further research should be conducted in order to properly examine field specific benefits in working life context. Moreover, as for instance BBA and engineering degrees have several sub-fields (sales, IT, construction management, electronics etc.), the differences in the benefits between the sub fields should be scrutinized.

The research concerns such students that have at least once volunteered in a position of trust and excludes students who have not engaged in any student activity. Regardless of the findings this research, a student may manage perfectly in working life simply with the knowledge acquired from lectures. Therefore, the differences on working life attributes of a student that has volunteered and a non-volunteer student could be examined, for instance at the time of graduation.

This study has focused solely with UAS students and the positions of trust existing in UASs. A similar research should also be conducted with university students to understand how do they perceive the effects student volunteering has caused in working life context. In addition, even further research could be conducted to compare the results of the studies.

Furthermore, as the most valued attributes gained from volunteering in positions of trust appeared to be from the soft skills category, a more specific research solely on the effect on soft skills should be executed. This possible study could then be extended to examine the students' employability factors affected by volunteering. In addition, further studies

could also explore to effects of volunteering on perceived employability. Altogether, this study has opened several doors for additional studies and theses.

## References

- Ali, B., Kazeem, K. & Rosli, I., 2017. The effect of soft skills and training methodology on employee performance. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 4(41): 288-406.
- Ammattikorkeakoululaki, 2014. *Finlex*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20140932>> [Accessed 11 June 2016].
- Atkins ry, 2017. *Board*. [Online] Available at: <<http://atkins.fi/en/board/>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].
- Baldwin, R., Finch, D. J., Hamilton, L. K. & Zehner, M., 2013. An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability. *Education + Training*, 55(7): 681-704.
- Brooks, C., 2016. *The 10 Most In-Demand Soft Skills*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/7860-skills-employers-want.html>> [Accessed 18 June 2017].
- Burchell, N., Hodges, D., Lay, M. C. & Rainsbury, E., 2002. Ranking workplace competencies: Student and graduate perceptions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2 March: 8-18.
- Burdney, J. L. et al., 2010. Motivations and Benefits of Student. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*, 1(1): 65-81.
- Civic Association for Adult Learning - KSL, 2017. <http://www.ksl.fi/6-toimihenkiln-teht-ja-roolit/>. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.ksl.fi/6-toimihenkiln-teht-ja-roolit/>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].
- Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland - Akava, 2017a. *Korkeakoulutettujen työttömyys vähenee*. [Online] Available at: <[https://www.akava.fi/tyoelama/akavalaiset\\_tyoelamassa/tyottomyyskatsaus/korkeakoulutettujen\\_tyottomyys\\_vahenee.20101.news](https://www.akava.fi/tyoelama/akavalaiset_tyoelamassa/tyottomyyskatsaus/korkeakoulutettujen_tyottomyys_vahenee.20101.news)> [Accessed 9 July 2017].
- Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland - Akava, 2017b. *Tilastoja korkeasti koulutettujen työttömyydestä*. [Online] Available at: <[https://www.akava.fi/files/12516/01\\_Tilastoja\\_korkeasti\\_koulutettujen\\_tyottomyydesta\\_yleisimmat\\_asteet.pdf](https://www.akava.fi/files/12516/01_Tilastoja_korkeasti_koulutettujen_tyottomyydesta_yleisimmat_asteet.pdf)> [Accessed 9 July 2017].
- Crosbie, R., 2005. Learning the soft skills of leadership. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 37(1): 46.
- De Cuyper, N., De Witte, H., Peeters, E. & Vanhercke, D., 2014. Defining perceived employability: a psychological approach. *Personnel Review*, 43(4): 592-605.
- de Villiers, R., 2010. The incorporation of soft skills into accounting curricula: preparing accounting. *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 2(18): 1-22.

El-Temtamy, O., Midra, S. & O'Neill, K. K., 2016. Undergraduate employability training and employment: a UAE study. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 6(1): 100-115.

Felfe, J., Schyns, B. & Tymon, A., 2014. The impact of university students' commitment on in- and extra-role performance. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 6(1): 149-167.

Finnish Chamber of Commerce, 2012. *Kauppakamarin osaamisselvitys*. [Online] Available at: <[https://kauppakamari.fi/wpcontent/uploads/2012/01/Kauppakamarin+osaamisselvitys+2012\\_kirja.pdf](https://kauppakamari.fi/wpcontent/uploads/2012/01/Kauppakamarin+osaamisselvitys+2012_kirja.pdf)> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Finnish Civil Society, n.d. *Nuorisoyhdistykset ja opiskelijajärjestöt*. [Online] Available at: <[http://www.kansalaisyhteiskunta.fi/jarjestohakemisto/nuorisoyhdistykset\\_ja\\_opiskelijajarjestot](http://www.kansalaisyhteiskunta.fi/jarjestohakemisto/nuorisoyhdistykset_ja_opiskelijajarjestot)> [Accessed 25 2017].

Finnish Patent And Registration Office, 2014. *How to found an association*. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.prh.fi/en/yhdistysrekisteri/perustaminen.html>> [Accessed 18 June 2017].

Greenbank, P., 2015. Still focusing on the “essential 2:1”: exploring student attitudes to extra-curricular activities. *Education + Training*, 57(2): 184-203.

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, 2017. *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.haaga-helia.fi/en/students-guide/welcome-haaga-helia/recognition-prior-learning-rpl>> [Accessed 27 August 2017].

Helsingin Tekniikan Opiskelijat - HTO ry, 2017. *Hallitus 2017*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.htory.fi/fi/hallitus-2017>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Ishengoma, E. & Vaaland, . T. I., 2016. Can university-industry linkages stimulate student employability?. *Education + Training*, 58(1): 18-44.

Joensuun Tradenomiopiskelijoiden Kilta ry , 2016. *Historia*. [Online] Available at: <<http://kiltary.blogspot.fi/p/historia.html>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Kärkinen, J., Laihonon , M. & Paajanen, E., 2016. *Mielipide: Korkeakoulu ei ole opiskelijakunnan vihollinen*. [Online] Available at:< <http://www.laureamko.fi/mielipide-korkeakoulu-ei-ole-opiskelijakunnan-vihollinen/>> [Accessed 12 June 2017].  
Lewis, P., Saunders, M. & Thornhill, A., 2012. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6 ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Lin, Y., 2010. Taiwanese university students' perceptions of university life. *Psychology Quarterly*, 23(2): 189-202.

National Association of Colleges and Employers - NACE , 2015. *Job Outlook 2016*. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.mccormick.northwestern.edu/career-development/documents/gettingstarted/jobsearch/NACE%20Job%20Outlook%202016.pdf>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

National Union of BBA Students - TROL, a. *Toimisto*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.trol.fi/yhteystiedot/toimisto/>> [Accessed 25 June 2017 ].

National Union of BBA Students - TROL, b. *Jäsenyhdistykset*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.trol.fi/trol/jasenyhdistykset/>> [Accessed June 25 2017].

Opetushallitus, n.d. 9. *AMMATTIKORKEAKOULUT*. [Online] Available at: <[http://www02.oph.fi/asiakkaat/rahoitus/rahjulk14/09\\_AMMATTIKORKEAKOULUT.pdf](http://www02.oph.fi/asiakkaat/rahoitus/rahjulk14/09_AMMATTIKORKEAKOULUT.pdf)> [Accessed 19 July 2017].

Opintopolku, a. *UAS*. [Online] Available at: <<https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/higher-education/polytechnics-universities-of-applied-sciences/>> [Accessed 31 August 2017].

Opintopolku, b. *Ammattikorkeakouluopintojen rakenne*. [Online] Available at: <<https://opintopolku.fi/wp/ammattikorkeakoulu/ammattikorkeakouluopintojen-rakenne/>> [Accessed 19 July 2017].

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD, 2016. *Unemployment rates by education level*. [Online] Available at: <<https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rates-by-education-level.htm#indicator-chart>> [Accessed 9 July 2017].

Poisson-de Haro, S. & Turgut, G., 2012. Expanded strategy simulations: developing better managers. *Journal of Management Development*, 3(31): 209-220.

Rao, M. S., 2013. Blend hard and soft skills to fast-track a management career. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 7(21): 3-4.

Rauman Liiketalousopiskelijain Kiltary, 2017. *Tieota meistä*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.rlokilta.fi/>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Robles, M. M., 2012. Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(4): 462-463.

Saldana, J., 2011. *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. 1 ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Social and Democratic Students In Finland - SONK, 2017. *Front Page*. [Online] Available at: <<http://sosialidemokraattisetopiskelijat.fi/category/in-english/>> [Accessed 25 June 2017].

Social and Democratic Students In Finland - SONK, 2017b. *SONKin osastot ympäri Suomea*. [Online] Available at: <https://sosialidemokraattisetopiskelijat.fi/category/taalla-toimimme/> [Accessed 25 June 2017].

Statistics Finland, 2017. *Appendix table 1. Main type of activity of graduates one year after graduation at the end of 2015*. [Online] Available at: [http://www.stat.fi/til/sijk/2015/sijk\\_2015\\_2017-01-26\\_tau\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/sijk/2015/sijk_2015_2017-01-26_tau_001_en.html) [Accessed 9 July 2017].

Student Union of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences - HELGA, 2017. *Board*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.helga.fi/en/helga/hallitus/> [Accessed 29 May 2017].

Student Union of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences - HELGA, b. *Student representatives*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.helga.fi/en/edunvalvonta/opiskelijaedustajat/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, a. *Peer Tutor Handbook*. [Online] Available at: [http://metkaweb.fi/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/Peertutor\\_handbook\\_2016.pdf](http://metkaweb.fi/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/Peertutor_handbook_2016.pdf) [Accessed 24 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2016 a. *Perussääntö*. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/METKAN-perussa%CC%88a%CC%88nto%CC%88-18.2.2016..19022016114320.pdf> [Accessed 13 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2016 b. *Tule muuttamaan Metropoliaa – METKA hakee opiskelijaedustajia!*. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/tule-muuttamaan-metropoliaa-metka-hakee-opiskelijaedustajia/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2017a. *Contact the employees*. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/en/contact/employees/> [Accessed 18 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2017b. *Hallitus*. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/yhteystiedot/hallitus/> [Accessed 12 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2017c. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/en/tutoring/toimipistevastaavat-en> [Accessed 24 June 2017].

Student Union of Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences - METKA, 2017d. *Become a Tutor*. [Online] Available at: <http://metkaweb.fi/en/tutoring/become-a-tutor/> [Accessed 24 June 2017].



Student Union of Kajaani University of Applied Sciences - KAMO, 2015. *Kajaanin ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijakunnan säännöt*. [Online] Available at: <[http://www.opiskelijakuntakamo.fi/kamo/OPISKELIJAKUNNAN\\_SAANNOT.pdf](http://www.opiskelijakuntakamo.fi/kamo/OPISKELIJAKUNNAN_SAANNOT.pdf)> [Accessed 13 June 2017].

Student Union of Lahti University of Applied Sciences - LAMKO, 2017. *Edustajisto*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.lamko.fi/fi/opiskelijakunta/edustajisto>> [Accessed 27 August 2017].

Student Union of National Coalition Party - Tuhatkunta, n.d. *In English*. [Online] Available at: <<http://kokoomusopiskelijat.fi/about/introduction/>> [Accessed 25 June 2017].

Student Union of Oulu University of Applied Sciences - OSAKO, 2017. *Frequently Asked Questions*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.osakoweb.fi/en/frequently-asked-questions/>> [Accessed 27 August 2017].

Student Union of Savonia University of Applied Sciences - SAVOTTA, 2016. *Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulun osakeyhtiön hallitukseen haetaan opiskelijaedustajaa 2.5.2016 alkavalle toimikaudelle*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.opiskelijakuntasavotta.fi/hallitukseen-haetaan-opiskelijaedustajaa/>> [Accessed 36 June 2017].

Student Union of Savonia University of Applied Sciences - SAVOTTA, 2017. *Edustajisto*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.opiskelijakuntasavotta.fi/opiskelijakunta/edustajisto/>> [Accessed 13 June 2017].

Student Union of Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences - SAMO, 2015. *Toimintasuunnitelma 2015*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.samo.fi/opiskelijakunta/ohjelmat/toimintasuunnitelma>> [Accessed 12 June 2017].

Student Union of Vaasa University of Applied Sciences - VAMOK, n.d. *Opiskelijaedustajat*. [Online] Available at: <<https://vamok.fi/fi/edunvalvonta/opiskelijaedustajat/>> [Accessed 25 June 2017].

Students of Metropolia Myyrmäki, 2017. *Tietoja*. [Online] Available at: <[https://www.facebook.com/pg/myyrmaenopiskelijat/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/myyrmaenopiskelijat/about/?ref=page_internal)> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto - SAMOK ry, 2016. *Opiskelijakuntien hallinto-opas*. [Online] Available at: <[https://samok.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/samok\\_opas\\_b5\\_verkko.pdf](https://samok.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/samok_opas_b5_verkko.pdf)> [Accessed 20 June 2027].

Tampereen Tradenomiopiskelijat ry, 2017. *What is TTO?*. [Online] Available at: <<http://wp.ttory.fi/in-english/>> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

teekkari.fi, 2015. *Ainejärjestöt ja killat*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.teekkari.fi/fi/ainej%C3%A4rjest%C3%B6t-ja-killat> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

The Union of Professional Engineers in Finland - IL, 2015b. *Student Culture*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ilry.fi/tietoa-insinööriliitosta/english/engineering-students/student-culture> [Accessed June 25 2017].

The Union of Professional Engineers in Finland - IL, 2015. *Student Culture*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ilry.fi/tietoa-insinööriliitosta/english/engineering-students/student-culture> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

The University of Birgmingham, n.d. *Volunteers*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.volunteers.manchester.ac.uk/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

TUAS Construction Students' Guild , 2017b. *In English*. [Online] Available at: <http://trok.fi/wp/index.php/yhteistyossa/> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

TUAS Construction Students' Guild, 2017. *In English*. [Online] Available at: <http://trok.fi/wp/index.php/in-english/> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

Turun Insinööriopiskelijat TIO ry, 2017. *TIO ry*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.tio.fi/index.php?page=tio-ry> [Accessed June 19 2017].

University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland, 2017a. *Student unions*. [Online] Available at: <http://samok.fi/en/nain-toimimme/opiskelijakunnat/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland - SAMOK, 2017b. *Home*. [Online] Available at: <http://samok.fi/en/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland - SAMOK, 2017c. *The Board*. [Online] Available at: <http://samok.fi/en/yhteystietomme/hallitus/> [Accessed 20 June 2017].

University of Applied Sciences Students in Finland – SAMOK, d. *Staff*. [Online] Available at: <http://samok.fi/en/yhteystietomme/henkilosto/> [Accessed 25 June 2017].

University of Cambridge, 2017. *Extra-curricular activities*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.cambridgestudents.cam.ac.uk/cambridge-life/extra-curricular-activities> [Accessed 22 June 2017].

Yhdistyslaki, 2016. *Finlex*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1989/19890503> [Accessed 18 June 2017].

## Interviews

Miihkali Härkönen. 2017. Interview. Interviewed by Jaana Paju. [Recorded] Helsinki 19 June 2017.

Veera Koli. 2017. Interview. Interviewed by Jaana Paju. [Recorded] Helsinki 19 June 2017.

Emmi Paajanen. 2017. Interview. Interviewed by Jaana Paju. [Recorded] Helsinki 19 June 2017.

## Appendix 1. Interview guide

1. **Missä luottamustoimissa olet toiminut opiskelujesi aikana ja missä toimit nykyään.**  
*In which positions of trust have you acted during your studies and what is your current position?*
2. **Huomioidaanko opiskelujen aikainen luottamustehtävissä toimiminen mielestäsi tarpeeksi ammattikorkeakouluissa? Jos ei huomioida, miten huomiointia pitäisi mielestäsi kehittää?**  
*Is acting in position of trust during studies acknowledged sufficiently in universities of applied sciences? If not, how should the acknowledgement process be developed in your opinion?*
3. **Oletko törmännyt luottamustehtävien positiivisen työelämävaikutuksen ”mainostamiseen” omalla kentällä?**  
*Have you encountered positive working life connected promotion for positions of trust in your own field?*
4. **Millaiseksi arvioisit keskiverron työmäärän oman kenttäsi opiskelijayhdistyksessä? Verrattuna kokoaika työhön**  
*How would you estimate the average workload of a student association/union to be in your own field? Compared with full-time work.*
5. **Millaiseksi arvioit oman työmääräsi nykyisessä luottamustehtävässäsi?**  
*How would you estimate your own workload in your current position?*
6. **Kuinka paljon vapaa aikaa käytetään luottamustehtävien hoitamiseen?**  
*How much is free-time used to complete tasks in a position of trust?*
7. **Minkä takia opiskelijat mielestäsi hakeutuvat luottamustehtäviin?**  
*In your opinion, why do students end up in a position of trust?*
8. **Millaisia osaajia nykyinen työelämä mielestäsi tarvitsee?**  
*In your opinion, what kind of experts the current working life requires?*
9. **Riittääkö nykyään pelkkä alakohtainen osaaminen työelämässä?**  
*Is bare sectoral expertise sufficient in the current working life?*
10. **Voiko luottamustehtävät/aktiivihommat kompensoida opintojen kattamattomuutta?**  
*Can acting in a position of trust compensate educational deficit?*
11. **Miten luottamustehtävät voisivat mielestäsi hyödyttää opiskelijaa työelämää ajatellen?**  
*In your opinion, how could a position of trust benefit students in regards of working life?*
12. **Onko teidän kentällä tutkittu tätä aihetta aiemmin?**  
*Has this topic been researched in your field before?*
13. **Voitko levittää kyselyä oman kenttäsi aktiiveille/toimijoille?**  
*Can you spread the upcoming survey for the people in your field?*

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire in Finnish

### Ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijien aikaisten luottamustehtävien vaikutus työelämätaitoihin - Kysely

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on selvittää opiskelijien aikaisten luottamustehtävissä toimimisen vaikutuksia ammattikorkeakoulutaustaisten henkilöiden työelämätaitoihin.

Kyselyn tuloksia käytetään opinnäytetyön tutkimusaineistona. Vastaaminen vie aikaa max. 10 minuuttia.

Lisätiedot: Jaana Paju, jaanapaju@outlook.com

#### Taustatiedot

1. Ikä

- Vastaus ☐ Alle 20  
☐ 20-24  
☐ 25-29  
☐ 30-34  
☐ 35 tai vanhempi

2. Sukupuoli

- Vastaus ☐ Mies  
☐ Nainen  
☐ Muu  
☐ En halua kertoa

#### Valmistuminen

3. Oletko valmistunut?

- Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

Valmistumisvuosi? Jos et ole valmistunut, voit siirtyä seuraavaan kysymykseen.

4. Mitä alaa opiskelet tai miltä olet valmistunut? Jos sinulla on useampi tutkinto, valitse se, jonka yhteydessä olet viimeksi toiminut luottamustehtävissä.

- Vastaus ☐ Liiketalous  
☐ Tekniikka  
☐ Sosiaali- ja terveys  
☐ Kulttuuri  
☐ Hotelli- ja ravintola  
☐ Matkailu  
☐ Muu, mikä?

Mikä

5. Onko luottamustehtävissä toimiminen viivästyttänyt valmistumistasi? \_\_\_\_\_

Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

#### Luottamustehtävät

6. Missä luottamustehtävissä olet toiminut? \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Opiskelijakunnan edustajiston jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Opiskelijakunnan edustajiston varapuheenjohtaja  
☐ Opiskelijakunnan edustajiston puheenjohtaja  
☐ Opiskelijakunnan hallituksen jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Opiskelijakunnan hallituksen varapuheenjohtaja  
☐ Opiskelijakunnan hallituksen puheenjohtaja  
☐ Valtakunnallisen opiskelijajärjestön hallituksen jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Valtakunnallisen opiskelijajärjestön hallituksen varapuheenjohtaja  
☐ Valtakunnallisen opiskelijajärjestön hallituksen puheenjohtaja  
☐ Opiskelijayhdistyksen hallituksen jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Opiskelijayhdistyksen hallituksen varapuheenjohtaja  
☐ Opiskelijayhdistyksen hallituksen puheenjohtaja  
☐ Killan hallituksen jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Killan hallituksen varapuheenjohtaja  
☐ Killan hallituksen puheenjohtaja  
☐ Tutor  
☐ Vastuututor  
☐ Opintotuki-, oikeusturva- tai tutkintolautakunnan jäsen/varajäsen  
☐ Ammattikorkeakoulun hallituksen jäsen  
☐ Muu

Mikä?

7. Oletko saanut AHOToitua tai hyväksiluettua luottamustehtävistä hankittua kokemusta osaksi opintoja? \_\_\_\_\_

Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ En

#### Ura ja työnhaku

8. Ovatko luottamustehtävät vaikuttaneet uravalintaasi? Jos ovat, kerro lyhyesti, miten. \_\_\_\_\_

Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

9. Ovatko luottamustehtävät parantaneet työnhakutaitojasi? Jos ovat, kerro lyhyesti, miten. \_\_\_\_\_

Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

10. Oletko saanut työ- tai harjoittelupaikan luottamustehtäviesi aikaisen verkostoitumisen kautta? \_\_\_\_\_

Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

11. Muistele viimeisintä työnhakuprosessiasi. Missä seuraavista prosessin vaiheesta mainitsit luottamustehtäväsi? \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ En maininnut missään vaiheessa  
☐ CV:ssä  
☐ Hakemuksessa  
☐ Esihaastattelussa (esim. puhelinhaastattelu)  
☐ Virallisessa haastattelussa  
☐ Muualla

Missä?

12. Arvioi, millainen vaikutus luottamustehtävien mainitsemisella oli viimeisimmässä työnhakuprosessissasi. \_\_\_\_\_

- Vastaus ☐ Erittäin positiivinen vaikutus  
☐ Positiivinen vaikutus  
☐ Ei vaikutusta tai en osaa sanoa  
☐ Negatiivinen vaikutus  
☐ Erittäin negatiivinen vaikutus

#### Työelämän vaikutukset

13. Ovatko luottamustehtävien kautta saadut kokemukset hyödyttäneet sinua työelämässä? Tarkenna lyhyesti myös miksi on tai miksi ei. \_\_\_\_\_

- Vastaus ☐ Kyllä  
☐ Ei

14. Mitä työelämään liittyviä taitoja opit tai kehitit luottamustehtävissä toimiessasi?

15. Mistä luottamustehtäviesi aikana oppimastasi/kehittämästäsi taidosta tai saamastasi kokemuksesta on tähän mennessä ollut sinulle eniten hyötyä työelämässä? Mainitse vähintään kaksi ja perustele lyhyesti millä tavalla.

#### Muut kommentit

16. Onko sinulla muuta kommentoitavaa kyselyn aiheeseen liittyen?

#### Tietojen lähetys

Tallenna

## Appendix 3. Questionnaire in English



### Volunteering in a position of trust during studies and its effects on a person's working life attributes

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the effects of study time volunteering in a position of trust on a person's skills in working life. The target groups are students and graduates from universities of applied sciences.

The results of the questionnaire will be used as research material for a thesis. Answering the questionnaire should take 10 minutes at the maximum.

Additional details: Jaana Paju, jaanapaju@outlook.com

#### Background information

1. Age

- Answer ☐ Under 20  
☐ 20-24  
☐ 25-29  
☐ 30-34  
☐ 35 or older

2. Gender

- Answer ☐ Man  
☐ Woman  
☐ Other  
☐ I don't want to tell

#### Graduation

3. Have you graduated?

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

Graduation year? If you have not graduated, please move on to the next question.

4. On which field do you study or have a degree from? If you have more than one degree, please choose the most recent one during which you volunteered in a position of trust.

- Answer ☐ Business  
☐ Engineering  
☐ Social services and healthcare  
☐ Culture  
☐ Hotel and/or restaurant  
☐ Tourism  
☐ Other

Please specify

5. Has volunteering in a position of trust delayed your graduation?

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No



**Positions of trust**

6. In which of the following positions of trust have volunteered? \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Member/vice-member of student parliament
- ☐ Vice-chairperson of student parliament
- ☐ Chairperson of student parliament
- ☐ Member/vice-member of board in a student union
- ☐ Vice-chairperson of board in a student union
- ☐ Chairperson of board in a student union
- ☐ Member/vice-member of board in a national level student union
- ☐ Vice-chairperson of board in a national level student union
- ☐ Chairperson of board in a national level student union
- ☐ Member/vice-member of board in a student association
- ☐ Vice-chairperson of board in a student association
- ☐ Chairperson of board in a student association
- ☐ Member/vice-member of board in a student guild (Kilta)
- ☐ Vice-chairperson of board in a student guild (Kilta)
- ☐ Chairperson of board in a student guild (Kilta)
- ☐ Tutor
- ☐ Head tutor
- ☐ Member of student allowance committee, board of legal rights, the degree of examiners or equivalent
- ☐ Member of board of the university of applied sciences
- ☐ Other, please specify below

7. Have you managed to use the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) procedures with your positions of trust or transfer them as credits into your degree? \_\_\_\_\_

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

**Career and job searching**

8. Have your positions of trust affected your career choice? If yes, please specify briefly. \_\_\_\_\_

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

9. Have the positions of trust improved your skills in job searching? If they have, please specify briefly, how. \_\_\_\_\_

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

10. Have you found a job or an internship through the connections you created while volunteering in a position of trust? \_\_\_\_\_

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

11. Try to memorize your most recent job search process. In which of the following stages of the process did you mention your positions of trust. \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I didn't mention in any of the stages
- ☐ On my CV
- ☐ On my application
- ☐ During preliminary interview (e.g. phone interview or similar)
- ☐ During the official interview
- ☐ Elsewhere, please specify below

12. Try to estimate what kind of an effect did the mentioning of positions of trust have on your most recent job search process.

- Answer ☐ Extremely positive effect  
☐ Positive effect  
☐ No effect or I don't know  
☐ Negative effect  
☐ Extremely negative effect

#### Effects concerning working life

13. Have the experiences gained while volunteering in a position of trust benefited in you in working life? Please also specify why they have or haven't.

- Answer ☐ Yes  
☐ No

14. Which skills related to working life did you learn or improve while volunteering in a position of trust?

15. Which skill learned/improved or experience gained while volunteering in a position of trust has benefited you the most in working life so far? Please mention at least two examples and explain briefly, how.

#### Comments

16. Please write here in case you have any other comments concerning the topic of this questionnaire.

#### Tietojen lähetys

## Appendix 4. Questionnaire open ended responses

### Question 8

*"I am searching for a job from the event industry as I organised the events for our association."*

*"Acting as a chairperson has brought confidence to work as a manager and I have had courage to apply for similar internships/jobs."*

*"I work on the organisational sector."*

*"Positions of trust created a permanent interest to work for the better tomorrow of students."*

*"I have started to gather experience about organisational work in administrative tasks in a third sector organisation on my own field (social service field). The professional qualifications of a Bachelor of Social Services include managerial knowledge but teaching the practices within the degree has been weak."*

### Question 9

*"After completing a few recruitments one know what employers want from applicants and they [positions of trust] have brought self-confidence about personal expertise and talking about it."*

*"Positions of trust have brought networks through which I have gotten job offerings from business representatives."*

*"The basic CV and application writing skills have improved. While on positions of trust, I have also received training about how to sell own expertise, develop working life skills, where search for jobs, etc."*

*"Meetings and contacting people in terms of business cooperation have also brought confidence for job searching and into interview situations."*

*"Volunteering in a position of trust has improved my self-confidence. I have met new people while on positions of trust and through it enhanced my interaction skills. I am [...] more quick-witted, I dare to speak and dare to confess better if I don't know something. [...]."*

*"[Job] performance skills have improved, [I] won't be shuddered with unexpected situations. "*

*"I am more self-confident and social skills have surely helped with job searching."*

### Question 13

*"Meeting practices in general, working with large projects, teamworking, doctrines concerning events."*

*"[I] have learned practicalities based on business economics, beneficial skills for marketing such as content producing and social media world. In addition, positions of trust have brought confidence for meetings and negotiations in working life."*

*"Tens of fresher infos, meetings with stakeholders and other forms of "being in public" and adjusting into being under pressure have brought confidence which has been beneficial in working life."*

*"Social skills and stress tolerance has developed. These two have been very helpful."*

*"The ability to work with different kinds of people and generally [working] in a team has developed a lot more in positions trust than for instance through school projects."*

*"Job searching, working time legislations and general rules in working life have become surprisingly familiar. Also teamworking skills and leadership."*

*"I can be more open and am more open to take the position of a leader if no one else will take it and have received praise for it!"*

*"Public speaking experience and development of social skills are beneficial on my field. Receiving criticism as well. [...]"*

*"[...] Have received national understanding on various issues that are present in current working life in one way or another. In addition, positions of trust have made me wiser to think more independently."*

*"Experience on all administration has been beneficial. [...] I have also familiarized myself with people who have supported my job searching. The fact that one can quite easily try something new in positions of trust is such an issue that should be emphasized. It has been really beneficial."*

*"[...] So far I have not had the chance to utilize these [skills] in working life but I cannot imagine a job in which [the skills] would not be helpful."*

## Question 15

*"General organising because I have had to manage even large entities simultaneously in my job. Event management because when faced with such task I did not have to start from zero but I was rather working full speed because I knew about the practices beforehand."*

*"Managing entities because it has been hard before. Substance expertise and different experiences about quality management into which I plan to specialise in on my career path."*

*"Social skills, I used to be really shy before. Second must be that stress tolerance because a lot happens in boards and one must know how react quickly [...]"*

*“Public speaking skills because one must face with different kinds of people in different situations in working life, and tolerance. [...] I big part of my job is to advice others or waiting. A person with weaker nerves would have exploded already.”*

*“Graphic expression- this is widely valued as a part of communications skills in the job market. Also managing large project entities and leadership is beneficial in an independent job.”*

*“Sales – the dare to contact people (performing in front of people in general). Problem solving – rarely everything goes as planned, the ability to solve problems fast and effectively.”*

*“1) I know how to work with different kinds of people and views, which eases working in a tight working community 2) I see problem and development points in working life and know how to react to them, for example with the trustees of the [labour] union.”*

*“Stress tolerance & meeting new people & issues without prejudices. On my chosen career path, good nerves are an essential quality and the job also includes a lot of research, independent study [...] and client meetings. Years in positions of trust have prepared [me] well for this.”*

*“Ability to organise and interaction skills, these I have needed when there as been collateral tasks and while working with customers, for instance.”*

*“I have learned to be a better leader and currently I take group members as individuals into account and always strive for equality in leadership. [...]”*

*“Courage to say personal opinions out loud and dare to ask and question. Very important skills in working life.”*

*“Presentation skills help in all situations in working life, especially with client meetings and arranging meetings. In these same situations, negotiation skills are also handy.”*